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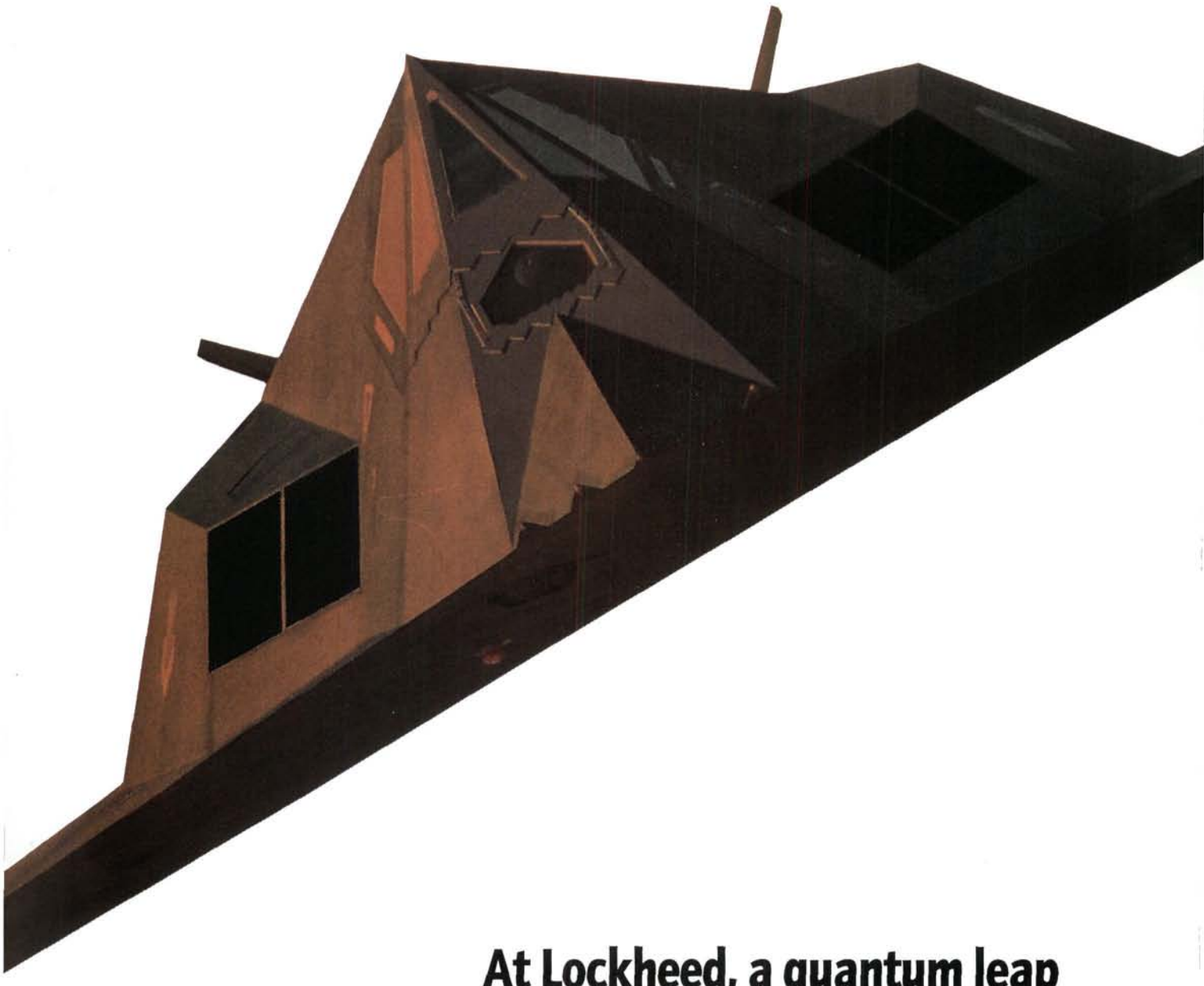

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A Weekly Journal of Opinion

MAY 3, 1993

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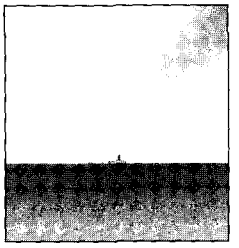

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CORRESPONDENCE

Old Democrat

To the editors:

In his zeal to define and defend President Clinton's "New Democrat" vision, Rob Shapiro ("Tax and Mend," March 22) sometimes verges on self-parody. For instance, he tells us that Old Democrats spend money to weatherize poor people's homes; New Democrats "invest" money to insulate government buildings. But eventually, a more substantive and troublesome theme emerges. The heart of the New Democrat vision, Shapiro seems to believe, is to disburse government money through business and high-income tax breaks rather than direct programs. Over and over again, he lauds Clinton's economic plan precisely because most of its public "investment" initiatives are actually "new tax benefits" and "more tax-code support" for corporations and the well-to-do.

Actually, I thought it was Old Conservative Democrats such as Russell Long and Lloyd Bentsen (along with plenty of Republicans) who thought it was a good idea to clutter up the tax code and undermine tax fairness with loopholes. But Old or New, one would have thought the unhappy Nixon-to-Reagan experience had taught us that "tax expenditures" are a particularly wasteful and unhelpful way to allocate the government's limited resources—and that the issue was largely settled in the 1986 Tax Reform Act.

Heretofore, I never would have viewed Shapiro as a big loophole advocate. As he himself points out in describing one of Clinton's proposed business tax breaks, "The evidence does not support ... enthusiasm for this strategy." Yet Shapiro nevertheless professes to be pleased with Clinton's loophole-based approach, simply because "it's clearly a long way from any traditional Great Society model." That looks more like new-Kempism than neo-Democratism to me.

Shapiro asserts that "the tax side of the Clinton program is straightforward. Wherever high-income people look, the tax collector would bear down." Wherever they look? The litany of tax breaks described in the article suggests otherwise. Indeed, Shapiro himself is forced to admit that the Clinton program will allow "some of the wealthy to shelter more income."

I agree that there is much to be applauded in Clinton's economic agenda (see my article, "Thrown for a Loop," March 15). But I also agree with TNR's March 22 Notebook item that we should "lament"—not praise—"the plethora of loopholes that Clinton's plan has opened up."

ROBERT S. MCINTYRE
Citizens for Tax Justice
Washington, D.C.

Sour lemons

To the editors:

In "Lemon Law" (March 29), Jeffrey Rosen criticizes the *Lemon* test in the light of the *Zobrest* case, now before the Supreme Court. The question in *Zobrest* is whether a state must pay for a sign language interpreter for a deaf student at a Catholic high school. But Rosen's answer goes far beyond that narrow question.

Rosen accurately notes that "the ratifiers of the First Amendment intended to preserve neutrality between religion and irreligion." But then he redefines "neutrality," leading him to assert that "students would be able to use state aid—including vouchers—in religious or secular private schools." He claims that "neutrality does not mean a wall of separation between church and state." Yet the Supreme Court, in *Everson* v. *Board of Education* (1947), said exactly the opposite: "In the words of Jefferson, the clause against establishment of religion by law was intended to erect a 'wall of separation' between church and state."

Now, what about the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment? Free exercise of religion should mean freedom from governmental impediment. It certainly has never meant freedom from private expense, any more than freedom of the press entitles indigent publishers to government funding.

Consider just a few of the many implications of Rosen's support for tax-paid vouchers for private schools. Clearly there could be no discrimination between religious schools. Thus, his proposal could encompass fundamentalist Bible schools teaching children that evolution is a lie and that homosexuality is an abomination punishable by death, or fundamentalist Muslim schools teaching that there is a sacred duty to murder Salmon Rushdie for blasphemy against Islam.

All religions that deserve to flourish will flourish best if government keeps its financial fingers off them and their religious schools. And nobody should be taxed to pay for anybody's religious teaching in schools that are not accountable to the public. That would be *true* neutrality.

SAMUEL RABINOVE
The American Jewish Committee
New York, New York

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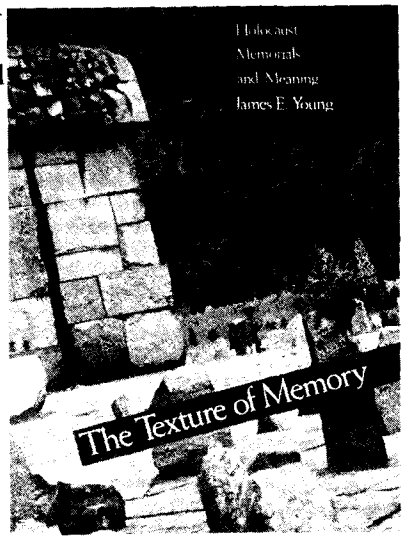

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Accountable

To the editors:

Eric Konigsberg, in documenting numerous instances of prescient General Accounting Office reports being ignored by lawmakers ("Waste Watchers," April 5), didn't answer the most important question about the phenomenon he describes: *Why* isn't anybody listening to the GAO? As a result, the article doesn't do justice to the argument—which is increasingly being made by lawmakers on both sides of the aisle—that the GAO's decline in influence is directly related to the erosion in the agency's autonomy over the last two decades.

A close look at how the GAO's workload has changed offers clear evidence that the agency is no longer as independent and self-driven as it once was. In 1969 the GAO initiated 90 percent of its own audits and studies; today, however, congressional requests account for fully 80 percent of the agency's workload. This dramatic growth in external demands has required the GAO to devote almost all its time and resources to projects that its congressional patrons—but perhaps not the GAO itself—deem important. The GAO is increasingly being used as little more than a partisan tool of congressional Democrats, often in their battles against the (historically Republican) executive branch.

Therein lies the real tragedy. It has been Congress itself that, by coopting the services of the GAO for its own partisan ends, has done much to undermine the GAO's autonomy and its reputation as a "nonpartisan, independent" agency. And until Congress agrees to unleash the GAO and allow it to set its own agenda, there is little hope for ensuring that, in the future, people will listen when this watchdog barks.

PETER UHLMANN
Arlington, Virginia

To the editors:

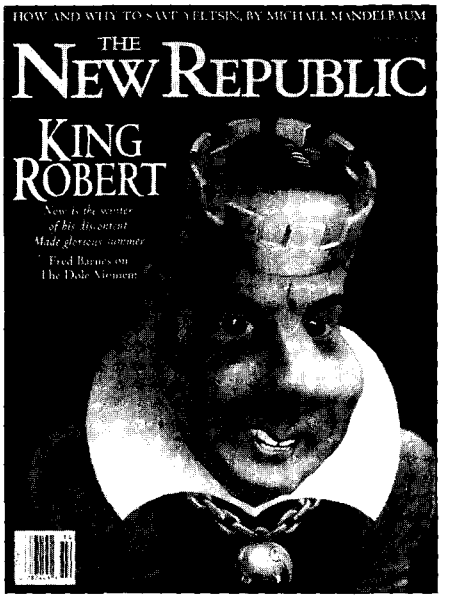
Eric Konigsberg's "Waste Watchers" has one minor failing: the omission of any comment as to whether the GAO's whistle-blowing reports are circulated to other than an inattentive Congress. Is there any legal impediment to informing the media of their program reports? Surely among their 3,800 employees there are some who could compile terse and lively press releases that would arouse more public concern. Congress is, after all, probably generally aware of most of the abuses that the GAO is addressing. Is it possible that political cum budgetary concerns are preventing broader public knowledge? If Konigsberg could ferret out the info for the benefit of TNR regulars, why can't the rest of the country get the word?

ARNOLD H. VOLLMER
New York, New York

Administrating to the sick

To the editors:

In "Operation Health Care" (March 29), Mickey Kaus, Robert Wright and John B. Judis wanted to throw away the baby with the bath water. American medicine is the finest. Why throw away the medicine when it is only the cost that is the problem? Practicing physicians know how to reduce the cost of medicine. Unfortunately, the White House has been listening only to those individuals who have dramatically increased the cost of



medicine. A well-known study by Woolhandler and Himmelstein published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 1991 pointed out that 24 percent of the medical dollar in 1987 went to administration costs, i.e., paperwork. Canada, which is semisocialized, spent only 11 percent. European countries range between 7 and 9 percent. Reducing administrative costs with simple restrictive legislation requiring no more than 10 percent administrative costs would undoubtedly double the savings. Therefore, 14 percent savings of administrative costs would save 28 percent of the medical dollar.

The "managed care" that the White House and your articles are encouraging would add an additional layer of administrative costs, and thus it would be necessary to reduce the actual medical care itself and bring in the concept of rationing. Rationing means denial of care.

YALE J. BERRY, M.D.
Boston, Massachusetts

Fundamentals

To the editors:

Maybe the Serbs and the "hard-line" Islamic nations should compare notes. Deborah Amos ("Bosnag," March 29) brought up an excellent point. The Muslims of Bosnia are considered too secular to be helped by most of the Islamic nations. On the other hand, the Serbs are basing their ethnic cleansing campaign on the premise that the Bosnian Muslims are fundamentalists in the process of establishing a foothold in Europe.

How about if neither of them is correct (the Islamic world or the Serbs) but the Bosnians are just a nation trying to survive as people first and as Muslims later? If the Muslims of Bosnia are "too secular" in the eyes of Islam, it is because it was the only way for them to survive in a Christian world. I wonder how fundamentalist any of these Muslims from the Middle East would stay if they lived as a minority with the Christians in the middle of Europe for twenty or thirty generations.

STJEPAN BALOG
Warren, Michigan

Are you being served?

To the editors:

Stephen Rodrick thinks he has it bad just because PBS shows Les Brown ("Les Is More," April 5): he ought to be counting his blessings. Here in San Francisco, the jewel in PBS station KQED's crown is a trashy British sitcom from the '70s called "Are You Being Served?" This show features men with big hair and wide ties, a number of scantily clad tarts and an old woman who provokes knowing looks and glares of canned laughter when she asks, "Has anyone seen my pussy?" every time her cat runs away. It's "Three's Company" with an English accent, but KQED markets it as sophisticated British humor. What it is, in its 7:30 weeknights time slot, is a ploy to get people who'd otherwise be watching "Wheel of Fortune" or "Cheers" or another syndicated show to tune into PBS.

Still, people pretty much get the television programming they deserve. And PBS will get the viewership it deserves: it may increase its ratings by appealing to the people who watch shitcoms and motivat-infomercials, but those same people are used to getting their pabulum for free. PBS's paying customers will instead write their checks to subscribe to cable channels like A&E, Discovery and Bravo, and PBS stations' appeals for cash will fall on the deaf ears of the ignorant louts who will have become their core audience.

ORLAND V. OUTLAND
San Francisco, California

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FROM WASHINGTON

City limits

The Clinton administration says it's intent on "reinventing government." Vice President Gore was on television only a few days ago, babbling about "this revolutionary new idea" of making the government "customer-friendly and customer-driven." But if Clinton and Gore are really serious about reinventing government, there is a genuinely revolutionary idea they might try: abolish the suburbs.

This is a serious suggestion. David Rusk, formerly the mayor of Albuquerque, makes the case in his new book, appropriately titled *Cities Without Suburbs.* Our nation's basic economic unit, Rusk notes, is the metropolis—that is, a central city and its surrounding communities. In 1950 the central cities were healthy, and only about 30 percent of metropolitan residents lived outside them. "City residents attended the same city school system.... They fought for control of the same city hall."

By 1990 the picture had changed. Virtually all metropolitan areas had grown, but the growth had been almost entirely suburban. Many central cities actually lost population, as a vicious cycle set in—with middle-class taxpayers leaving for the quiet life in the suburbs, thereby depriving the city of tax revenue needed to maintain schools and services, which in turn encouraged more middle-class flight. The cities were left with the poor. The metropolitan area that includes Detroit, for example, gained 1.1 million people between 1950 and 1990. But the city of Detroit itself lost 44 percent of its population, and became a fiscal wreck.

That's a familiar story. Rusk's contribution is to note that it didn't have to be this way. Indeed, it wasn't that way in the few cities that managed to capture much of the suburban growth for themselves. These "elastic" cities (e.g., Houston and, yes, Albuquerque) either aggressively annexed the surrounding suburbs or had enough vacant land inside their borders to accommodate expansion. Rusk produces elaborate charts and tables showing that all sorts of good things happen in "elastic" cities. They have stronger growth, faster job creation, more resilient manufacturing sectors, higher bond ratings, less racial segregation, a more highly educated work force, better sex, etc.

O.K., not the sex part. But all the other things appear to be true. When cities incorporate their own suburbs, the cycle of middle-class flight has a hard time getting started. There are few places for the middle class to flee *to.* The cities have prosperous constituents to tax, so they have enough money to maintain roads, sewers and schools. Rusk points out that the mayors who periodically appear in Washington to whine about the urban "crisis" and beg for fiscal relief almost invariably come from Detroit-style "inelastic" cities that have been unable to absorb their own suburbs (often because they are hemmed in by a "cordon sanitaire" of independent towns).

Rusk's most important finding concerns race segregation. Yes, there are ghettos in "elastic" cities such as Houston. But segregation is less severe, because there are fewer independent suburbs that consciously exclude poor blacks. Sure, even within a single city, individual neighborhoods will resist integration. But those neighborhoods don't have zoning authority. The city government, representing all the various groups, has the power to force an accommodation. As a result, while ghettos exist, they are easier to escape.

Which is the key point. Rusk admits that "America's real urban problem" is the black and Hispanic underclass. But he dissents from the near universal consensus that the solution to this problem is to try to rebuild the ghettos—either through government aid (liberals), local entrepreneurship (conservatives) or "enterprise zones" (everyone). "It has never worked," Rusk argues. "Bad communities defeat good programs." Even if a training program helps people get jobs, when they get those jobs they tend to leave the ghetto, not stay and make it bloom.

The right strategy, according to Rusk, isn't development but *dispersion.* That's something few politicians have the guts to advocate. The last one I can recall was Eugene McCarthy, in his debate with Robert Kennedy during the 1968 California primary. Kennedy, in a cunning bit of left/right demagogy, accused McCarthy of wanting "to take 10,000 black people and move them into Orange County." But McCarthy was right. It's one thing to have a city with 15 percent of the population living below the poverty line. It's another to have that 15 percent living in one neighborhood, creating the critical mass necessary for an underclass to develop. If residents of South-Central L.A. are desperate to escape the ghetto, the government should help them do so. That's easier when the places to which they might escape are not separate, paranoid suburbs (like Orange County).

The solution's obvious: make suburb and city one. Whoever gave more prosperous citizens the right to secede from the larger community anyway? The political obstacles, however, are even more obvious. There are, first, the suburbanites themselves, who may not want to pay higher taxes to support their hard-pressed neighbors. Then there's the Black Power Trap. Middle-class flight left many central cities in control of the African Americans who remained. Consolidation with the suburbs would put blacks back in the minority. The best thing that District of Columbia Mayor Sharon Pratt Kelly could do, if she really cared about the economic well-being of her largely black constituents, would be immediately to dissolve the District of Columbia and merge it into prosperous, white Montgomery County, Maryland. But then Kelly wouldn't be mayor anymore. On the other hand, programs to "develop" dying central cities (as Bobby Kennedy realized) make everybody happy—black mayors and suburban segregationists.

How to counter this formidable coalition? Rusk offers a gimmick that might help buy off middle-class suburbanites—by giving them extra deductions for local taxes if those taxes go to "consolidated" governments. In the 1970s Representative Henry Reuss of Milwaukee tried a tougher tactic, attempting to condition federal aid on reform of local governments. The idea died on the House floor.

Abolishing suburbs shouldn't be unthinkable. Rusk reminds us that Brooklyn was once a separate city, whose wealthy residents vigorously resisted consolidation with New York. In 1898 the state legislature overruled them, creating a city that, until the rise of new suburbs fifty years later, was the envy of the world. Perhaps today's suburban voters can also be rolled—if you count rural Americans, non-suburbanites still barely outnumber suburbanites. Perhaps in some states activist liberal judges will threaten to rule that the entire system of balkanized municipal government violates federal anti-segregation laws.

Perhaps. But, as Rusk admits, challenging the suburbs is "the toughest political task in America." Something tells me Clinton's not about to take it on.

MICKEY KAUS

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

MAY 3, 1993

BEYOND GRIDLOCK

Over the past two weeks, Bill Clinton has been loudly denouncing those in Congress who aim to tamper with his economic program as upholders of "gridlock" and "paralysis." There is, certainly, some of that spirit alive on Capitol Hill. Robert Dole and many of his filibustering colleagues seem primarily motivated by the desire to hand the president a political defeat, rather than the wish to build a better budget. (Asked what kind of compromise would be acceptable, Dole laconically remarked, a "big one.") But there's another category of resistance to the plan, and it is actually more reformist than the president is. Far from dragging him away from his election mandate, it's actually helping to keep him to it.

The best test of seriousness on the part of the plan's opponents is the one Clinton himself proposed when he presented his "Vision of Change" to a joint session of Congress in February: Do they have a real alternative? In the case of Dole, Trent Lott, Alan Simpson, Thad Cochran and many others, the answer is no. These senators have been content to rely on old Republican platitudes about tax-and-spend Democrats without saying what *they* would do to get a handle on the deficit, which they agree is strangling the American economy. Representative John Kasich of Ohio and Senator Hank Brown of Colorado, on the other hand, have presented specific alternatives. But as Fred Barnes explained (see "King Robert," TNR, April 5), this runs counter to official Republican strategy.

Another category of unconstructive criticism comes from the ancient phalanx of special interests, which has been doing its best to mutilate the administration's spending cuts. These include wealthier retirees, the military and the Western trio of mining, logging and cattle interests, to name only a few. But Clinton himself must shoulder much of the blame for the bidding extravaganza that is now taking place. He had every opportunity to present his budget as a take-it-or-leave-it proposition, and to refuse to make any exceptions. Instead he bowed, first to the Westerners, then to federal pensioners who didn't want "sacrifice" to require contribution from their annual cost-of-living adjustments. The president will surely bend again, to whatever organized interest can bring sufficient pressure to bear.

But much of the skepticism about the president's plan is far more substantive and cannot be chalked up to obstructionism or special pleading. It has come not only from Democratic deficit hawks such as Jim Sasser and David Boren, but from such unlikely statesmen as House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dan Rostenkowski. It was congressional Democrats, after all, who first demanded more deficit reduction, to which Clinton later agreed, to the tune of $67 billion over five years. (The budget, however, still doesn't address where the difference will come from, putting the additional spending cuts off until the "out years" where they have a tendency never to happen.) Now many of the same Democratic legislators are making clear that it is not only Republican gridlockers who are worried about his stimulus package.

Rostenkowski, for example, has joined Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan in resisting Clinton's proposed investment tax credit, a new loophole of doubtful benefit, which would cost the Treasury $21 billion over five years. Even many of the businesses that would benefit from this tax break oppose it because of their philosophical objection to government tinkering with what should be market-based decisions.

This is not the only problem with the stimulus package, much of which will go to pork barrel projects and wasteful, make-work summer jobs programs. Indeed, most of Clinton's package is not "stimulus" at all, such as the $1.8 billion it includes for student loans and $300 million for childhood immunization. Some of this would be money well spent but has nothing to do with lifting the economy. Other elements of the package, like extending unemployment benefits again, which even the Republicans support, sound humane but will do little to help the economy and nothing to create jobs. The larger point is that stimulus, if the package were stimulus, is not needed to solidify our emergence from recession. It may, however, drag the economy back down if it stands in the way of deficit reduction or spurs inflation.

Clinton is now trying to blur all the objections to his program into a single demonic impediment. This is quite wrong. Instead, the president should draw the line against further concessions to special interests, renew his commitment to deficit reduction and listen to the Republicans on his stimulus package. For the time being, the spirit of change seems to have relocated to Capitol Hill. •

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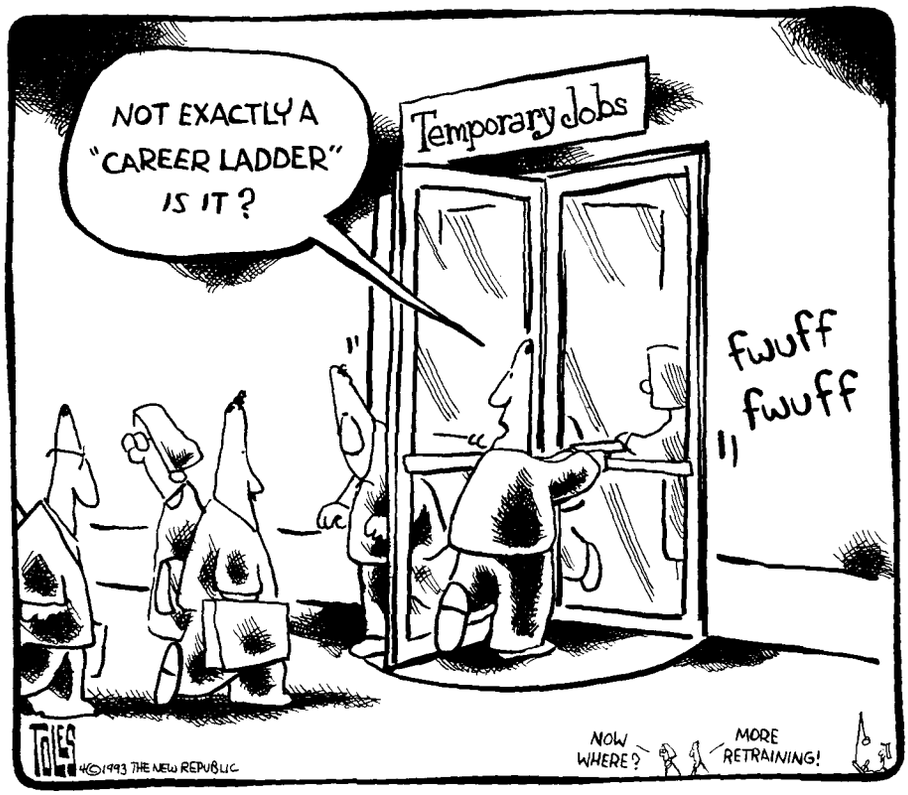
NOTEBOOK

CLINTON SUCK-UP WATCH: "And what has emerged at the end of last week, more than halfway through the 100-day period that has become something of a measuring stick, is a sketch of a president who is tireless, who is resilient, who is politically gifted and who is committed to change, both substantive and stylistic." —David Shribman, *The Boston Globe*, March 21

THE MEANING OF MEANING: In an April 6 speech to University of Texas students, Hillary Rodham Clinton jettisoned health care jargon in favor of what she called "a new politics of meaning." Our health care system, she said, is addled not only by "micromanagement and ... regulation and bureaucracy," but by the "alienation, despair and hopelessness" that lie "not very far from our surface." The solution? "Substitut[ing] instead human caring, concern and love." She wasn't talking off the cuff, but citing *Tikkun* magazine editor Michael Lerner, who in the July-August issue challenged Democrats to "take the values-oriented, psychologically and spiritually sensitive approach of the Politics of Meaning and introduce it into every area of contemporary thought and activity." Generational hucksters Neil Strauss and Bill Howe also did their part, writing in the December issue of *The Atlantic* that "a politics of meaning, led not by the white-coated scientist, but by the black-cloaked preacher," would hold boomers in thrall. Soon, others were rushing in, on both sides of the border. "The politics of meaning is not based simply on appearances," insisted Les Campbell in the *Ottawa Citizen*. "It means the truly difficult public policy issues facing Canadians." It's good to hear that the First Lady is also pro-meaning. But before signing on, one question: What on earth are these people talking about?



BANG, BANG: Since February 23 nine people have been the victims of a drive-by gunman in the Mount Pleasant-Columbia Heights area of Washington, D.C., the city's multiracial answer to East Greenwich Village. Of those nine, two have been killed, and police have stepped up security in the neighborhood, to a blizzard of press, including three front-page stories in *The Washington Post*. In the same time span, the rest of D.C. saw fifty-eight homicides. Since January 1 the count is 129, 34 in the Southeast quadrant of Washington, and 27 in the month of February alone. These deaths are lucky to warrant six lines on the back page of the Post's Metro section, the victims no less trapped by their circumstances, but less damaging, perhaps, to property values.

UNDIGNITARY: The opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is to be attended by a number of dignitaries. Among others, the heads of every European country have been invited—with the exceptions, on the recommendations of the State Department, of Serbia and its puppets in Kosovo and Macedonia. "It would be rank hypocrisy to invite the Serbs under current circumstances," says Naomi Paiss, director of communications at the museum. We agree. But what about another invited guest, Franjo Tudjman of Croatia? In his book *Bespuca—Povjesne Zbiljnosti* (Wastelands—Historical Truth), Tudjman claims that the figure of "up to 6 million dead is founded too much on both emotional, biased testimonies and on exaggerated data in the postwar reckonings of war crimes." (See "Croatianism" by Robert D. Kaplan, November 25, 1991.) He then argues that "in the mid-'80s, world Jewry still has the need to recall its 'holocaust' by trying to prevent the election of the former U.N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim as president of Austria!" Campaigning in 1990 for the job that now warrants him an invitation, Tudjman won Croatian nationalist votes by exclaiming, "Thank God, my wife is neither a Serb nor a Jew!" Not clear whether he's planning to show up. •

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WHITE HOUSE WATCH

No-doz

By Fred Barnes

Consider these little-known facts from the Clinton White House. President Clinton normally sleeps five to six hours a night. When he gets less—it's happened a handful of times since Inauguration Day—he does the obvious thing. He takes an afternoon nap, not at his desk but in the White House residence. (Despite his reputation, President Reagan didn't nap, though he dozed off occasionally.) Until the second weekend in April, when Clinton was called away by the death of his father-in-law, most White House aides hadn't taken a Saturday and Sunday off. Their weekend work, by the way, includes rounding up a crowd of thirty to forty people in the Oval Office to watch Clinton give his Saturday radio address. The rationale is he speaks better to an audience than just a microphone. One more fact: Clinton now complains when Saturday meetings drag and keep him from lollygagging with family and friends.

The White House is coming to grips with workaholism. Working insanely long and hard (and bragging about it) may be an ideal of the yuppie meritocracy, but it's a real problem for the Clinton presidency. If you doubt that, recall the clumsiness of Clinton's first two weeks in Washington. Clinton and his aides staggered into town, as fatigued as foot soldiers after a long war. They'd gotten little sleep during the presidential campaign, not much more in the transition and practically no days off. Besides, many were also involved in moving themselves and their families to new homes in Washington. The politics of exhaustion took over. Clinton lost control of his own agenda. Gays in the military, which he intended to defer for six months, became the dominant issue. And he blundered in picking nominees for attorney general.

This was exactly what Clintonites had been warned to avoid. Before January 20, Mack McLarty, soon to be White House chief of staff, his deputy Mark Gearan and Clinton adviser Vernon Jordan interviewed almost every presidential chief of staff of the last two decades. "The first piece of advice you got from Sununu on down was to get your rest, pace yourself," says Gearan. The reason was simple: someday a real crisis will hit and everyone, president and staff, will need to be clear-headed. Few followed that advice at first. But Gearan, who has a 1-year-old daughter, was one of them. He declared he would not work Sundays, and he hasn't.

Clinton's problem is he's a night owl who likes to get up and jog in the early morning. He usually departs the Oval Office by 7 p.m. But that's not the end of the work day. Often there's an evening function to attend (dinner, speech, banquet). If not, he's still engaged, phoning McLarty a few times each evening. Somehow Clinton manages to read and watch T.V., chiefly news and sports, basketball games especially. Recently he's read *Pandaemonium* by Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan and *Preparing for the Twenty-first Century* by Paul Kennedy. Now he's working on *The Enlightened Mind*, an ecumenical anthology of religious writings (Muhammad, Jesus Christ, Chief Seattle, etc.). As best I can tell from talking to aides, Clinton gets to sleep around midnight, on average.

He's up by 6 a.m., at the latest, and soon out jogging. "It gives you a little energy—if you can get up," says White House spokesman George Stephanopoulos. That's a big if. Clinton putters around the house for another two hours before going to the Oval Office. He reads the newspapers, watches the news on T.V. That's if he's in town. On the road, there's no putter time. He went full throttle at the lumber conference and the summit with Russian President Boris Yeltsin. He flew to Portland, Oregon, on the evening of April 1, met with the editorial board of *The Oregonian*, got up early on April 2 to jog, then attended eight hours of stupefyingly boring testimony from dozens of people on timber issues, after which he held a press conference with regional reporters. That night, he had a working dinner with aides to get up to speed on Yeltsin. He got to bed by midnight and was out jogging at 6:30 a.m. on April 3. Air Force One left at 8:30 a.m. for Vancouver, British Columbia, and the summit, where he met with Yeltsin three times, including a long dinner. Still, he was up the next day to jog and to go to church, then met again with Yeltsin, held a joint press conference and flew back to Washington, arriving at 1 a.m., April 5. "Those days weren't that bad," says Stephanopoulos.

It's easy for young aides to match this ironman schedule. Sixty-three of 450 White House staffers are 23 years or younger, and they've got nothing better to do than arrive early and stay late. In fact, the staff is so young that the Old Executive Office Building next to the White House is nicknamed the Young Executive Office Building. "These people could have a reasonable life if they wanted to," says a senior White House official. "When they stay late, three-fourths of them aren't doing a damn thing. They're just screwing around, looking for dates."

Older folks work late too. Howard Paster, 48, is the chief White House lobbyist on Capitol Hill. He works both a White House and a congressional schedule, which means he attends early morning meetings at the White House and stays late when Senate or House sessions last into the evening. Paster normally gets home between 9 and 10 p.m., but he takes his laptop computer to do a little work before bed. One night he was too drowsy to work past 11:30 p.m., so he set the alarm for 4:30 a.m. Seated with his laptop, he found himself saying, "This is nuts." But he stayed up, finished the work and went to the White House for an early meeting. Paster is so busy that he doesn't return most phone calls

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he gets from Thursday on. He devotes Sunday to returning calls.

David Dreyer, 36, and Jeff Eller, 37, top deputies to Stephanopoulos, carpool to the White House at 6:45 a.m. from their homes on Capitol Hill. Dreyer, a former aide to House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt and a skillful speechwriter, rises at 5 a.m., reads four papers (*The Washington Post, The New York Times, The Washington Times, The Wall Street Journal*), plays with his daughter and eats breakfast before leaving home. He never quits work until after watching the evening network news shows. But he routinely stays hours later. It depends on when the president's briefing book for the next day is completed. It's filled with memoranda, talking points, speech texts and other material related to events on Clinton's schedule. Dreyer helps fill it.

The grind at the White House compares unfavorably with almost any other place of employment in D.C. On Capitol Hill, everyone works hard while Congress is in session, then lets up during the frequent recesses. On Fridays, folks go home early. Only a presidential campaign matches the White House workload, but that lasts only months, not years. Of course, all White House staffs don't work as long as Clinton's. In the Bush era, virtually no one worked Saturdays or Sundays, but that was a sign of lack of commitment, not healthful work habits.

The Clinton crew is lightening up. Stephanopoulos takes off at 8 p.m., no later. "I'm disciplined about leaving," he says. "I just do it. I can't do my job if I work later than that." Bruce Reed, the deputy domestic adviser, plans to cut out earlier when his wife has a baby. And so on, except for Gene Sperling, deputy assistant to the president for economic affairs. Sperling is legendary. When Clinton spots him, he often says, "Gene, get some sleep." Sperling arrives at 7 a.m., goes home at 1 a.m. A co-worker asked Sperling if he'd like to start playing tennis regularly. Sperling wondered whether a court would be open "between 11 and 12." Won't that be too hot? the co-worker asked. "No," said Sperling, "I mean 11 and 12 at night." •

SOUTH AFRICA POSTCARD

ROCKIN' ROBBEN

By Richard Stengel

ROBBEN ISLAND

Esiquithini: At the island. That is how the Xhosa people refer to this flat, windswept outcrop of slate and limestone in Table Bay, seventeen miles off the coast of Cape Town. Leper colony, lunatic asylum, military base, Robben Island—named after the Dutch word for seal, hundreds of which cavort in the cold currents that wash its rocky beaches—is most famous, or infamous, as the prison that has interned African rebels, from eighteenth-century warrior-chiefs to Nelson Mandela. It is a place burned in the South African consciousness, consecrated by the suffering of those who have lived and died here.

Jan van Riebeeck first settled Cape Town in 1452 and four years later banished his Khoi-Khoi interpreter, Autshama, to Robben Island for allegedly plotting an insurrection. Autshama holds a distinguished place in the island's history: he was its first prisoner and the only one ever to escape. The Xhosa warrior Nxele, who was exiled to the island by the British in 1819 after leading 10,000 warriors against Grahamstown, attempted to escape by swimming in the shark-infested waters, but drowned. In Xhosa, his name is still a synonym for a forlorn hope.

But the last Xhosa warrior left Robben Island alive and well. He had spent nearly two decades there, crushing stone, excavating lime, collecting kelp, thinking, studying and debating. In the liberation movement, Robben Island was deemed Mandela University.

Now the nationalist government is debating what to do with the island. In the mid-1980s a committee of Cape Town businessmen lobbied to turn it into a gambling resort, replete with a five-star hotel. But this spring the Cabinet nixed that idea and elected to turn Robben Island into a combination museum/nature reserve.

For the last few years the island has been open to selected visitors, under strict conditions. No. 1: "Under no circumstances may visitors bring diving apparatus." The list ends with the caveat that visitors "can be subjected to interrogation, frisking and screening." The forty-minute sail to the island is aboard the "Protea," a scarred and rickety blue-and-white ferry. Along with a few relatives of prison warders, the other passengers on the day I visited the island were thirty-three members of the Senior Jewish Women's Society of Cape Town. It was a gusty day, and I huddled on a wooden bench at the stern between Mrs. Rose and Mrs. Rosenblum, both in their late 70s. I asked Mrs. Rose, small and sprightly with grizzled gray hair and a flirtatious manner, why she wanted to visit Robben Island. She explained, "I can see the island from my house, and I wanted to see my house from the island."

As we approached Robben Island, it was not hard to imagine it as an exclusive tropical resort. At the stone harbor, seals were preening themselves in the sun on the side of the dock and a small group of smiling warders were there to meet us. The ladies piled onto a bus while I was greeted by Colonel Mike de Nysschen, the commander of the prison, a sturdy, mustachioed fellow with a bluff but nervous manner; he never stopped tapping his foot or smoking during my guided tour of the island. Our first stop was Section B, where Mandela and the other political prisoners stayed. Nysschen told me that the island was still a working prison, with 750 common-law inmates and about 250 warders. (As in Mandela's day, there are no white prisoners, and no black warders.)

Section B is a handsome one-story granite building

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with pretty wood-frame windows. It was reserved for the thirty or so most prominent political prisoners—de Nysschen referred to them as "security prisoners"—who included not only Mandela but his colleagues Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki and Ahmed Kathrada. Past the heavy oak front door is a courtyard that is about the size of a tennis court. In fact, it is a tennis court; the surface is painted green with the familiar configuration of white lines. This is the spot where Mandela and his colleagues hammered slate into gravel when they first arrived on the island in 1964; it was converted to a tennis court when things began to loosen up in the late 1970s. Beside the court there is a narrow rectangle of grass and scraggly bushes, where Mandela planted a small vegetable garden. He was particularly proud of his tomatoes.

Section B is empty now. De Nysschen escorted me down a narrow hallway with polished stone floors to cell No. 4, where Mandela lived for eighteen years. The door was open and a single fluorescent bulb shined overhead. I actually gasped when I saw the cell. The space is so small (six-and-a-half feet by five-and-a-half feet), Mandela is so large (six-foot-two) and he lived there for so long. A paperback-sized window at eye-level overlooks the courtyard, and a single bookshelf is mounted to one wall. Mandela and his thirty or so colleagues in Section B were locked in their cells from 4 p.m. till 5:30 a.m.—the light burned all night. Though the size of a closet, Robben Island prisoners regarded these cells as the Ritz compared with other prison accommodations.

The next stop was the prison visiting area, which is in a separate building a short walk from the cells. For the first ten years that Mandela and his colleagues were on the island, they were allowed only one visit every six months. On the wall instructions to visitors are written in English, Afrikaans and Zulu. "Prisoners may be allowed the following items to receive. Two pajamas. Four handkerchiefs. One slippers [sic]." No physical contact with prisoners was allowed. Visitors were separated from the prisoners by a glass window about the size and shape of an early 1950s television screen. The glass itself was murky and smudged, and seemed to reduce the image on the other side, as if one were looking through the wrong end of a telescope. (A tiny ANC VIVA was scratched onto the wall next to the glass.) Prisoners talked to their visitors through a clunky old microphone beneath the glass while warders stood on either side listening to every word. This was Mandela's window on the world for eighteen years.

From there, the colonel drove me to the lime quarry where Mandela and the others worked for about a decade. On the way the colonel pointed out the island's scraggly golf course, for the use of warders only. "I call it the obstacle course," he said with a chuckle. The quarry itself is about the size of a gouged-out football field, surrounded on three sides by white cliffs of lime. In the sun the cliffs were blinding; it hurt one's eyes to look at them. It took Mandela and the prisoners years of pressure to get permission to wear sunglasses. In the early years, the men used to sing freedom songs while they worked, but the authorities silenced them. In later years, it was here in the quarry that they conducted classes in English, economics, Marxism and the history of the ANC.

Near the quarry was the beach where the prisoners were occasionally taken to collect kelp, a duty they liked because they could also spear crayfish and mussels and scarf them down for lunch. From the shore, Cape Town, twinkling in the sun at the base of Table Mountain, looks achingly close, much closer than Robben Island looks from the other side.

At each stop, I paused to take pictures, and each time de Nysschen scurried away so he would not be in the shot. These four stops are not on the regular tour of the island, and the colonel was hustling to get through them so that I could join the ladies. The ladies' tour was led by a friendly young warder named Wayne Cook. His tour concentrates on the more historical sites of the island: the rusted guns from World War II when the island was a military base, the picturesque shipwrecks, the squat Herbert Baker church, the quaint, candy-striped nineteenth-century lighthouse.

I caught up with the ladies at the general store in town, where the prison staff lives. The town, with its dark Victorian public buildings and gaily colored matchbox houses with trim little gardens, resembles a working-class British seaside resort. At the general store, which doubles as the tourist gift shop, the ladies were buying postcards. De Nysschen encouraged me to send one. "It's a once in a lifetime opportunity, man. I'll send it for you, and it will be postmarked Robben Island."

The ladies were all scribbling cards to their grandchildren in America and Australia, most of whom had probably never heard of Robben Island. I then joined them on the bus for the last leg of the tour, which was like taking a drive through a private game reserve. We saw springbok gamboling through the tall grass, some kudu grazing in the distance and a colony of several thousand penguins waddling clumsily along the beach.

The wind had picked up and the sail back was nasty. Huge swells rocked the boat and sprayed the ladies in back, some of whom had wisely toted umbrellas. Mrs. Rose hadn't, and at one point she grabbed my arm and asked me to escort her to the front cabin, where we would be protected from the elements. We inched our way there, getting thoroughly soaked in the process. When we arrived she sat down and put her hand in mine.

"See that lady over there in white," she whispered about a bespectacled woman who was sitting in the corner with her eyes closed, looking seasick. "Her husband was the first heart transplant patient of Dr. Christian Barnard. You know Christian Barnard, don't you?" she said. I nodded yes and then asked her what happened to the woman's husband. "Oh, he died," she said matter-of-factly, and looked out the porthole.

RICHARD STENGEL is the author of *January Sun: One Day, Three Lives, a South African Town* (Simon & Schuster).

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L.A., city without politics.

FALLING DOWN

By Harold Meyerson

LOS ANGELES

L.A. isn't curdling; it's crumbling. Despite fears of a post-verdict riot that have all but paralyzed the city—rumors sweeping workplaces, shops closing early, commercial areas emptying out as if a hurricane loomed—there's not much evidence of a classic political backlash. *L.A. Times* polling taken on April 7, 8 and 9 shows that Mike Woo, the 41-year-old city councilman whose opposition to then-police chief Daryl Gates made him heir to Tom Bradley's liberal coalition, is still the candidate most likely to succeed Bradley as mayor.

There is a backlash, though it finds expression not in public policy but in private paranoias. The law-and-order posturing of the mayoral candidates doesn't seem to have appreciably altered anybody's standing, and a measure authorizing a small property tax hike to pay for more cops is not expected to win the required two-thirds support in the April 20 primary voting. On the other hand, the city is awash in pseudo-cops: $6-an-hour security guards stand watch over every hamburger stand and office. I know of at least one affluent neighborhood where residents have hired a full-time guard on each block. And so many neighborhood associations have elaborate plans for barricading streets that L.A. will surely become a giant obstacle course if rioting breaks out. By the time you read this, the vision of Mike Davis's *City of Quartz*—a fortress L.A. of moats and walls—may already be passé.

But the rent-a-cop craze is only the latest in L.A.'s series of private solutions to public problems. The dominant impulse in L.A. isn't to reform the city from either the left or the right. It's to buy your way out—an act of personal secession. A few months ago, another *L.A. Times* poll unearthed the stunning statistic that of the 75 percent of white L.A. parents with kids in the K-12 age range, 38 percent had their children in L.A. public schools and 37 percent in private or parochial ones. (And a relatively low percentage of L.A. whites are either Catholic or devout Jews.)

Of course, it doesn't work. America's most privatized city is also America's most terrified. And it's not libertarian demons that have driven L.A. down this cul-de-sac. (L.A. in the sway of an ideology? You kiddin'?) Rather, it's that government here is almost totally ineffectual, and politics almost totally nonexistent.

L.A. is the city where government sidesteps itself. It's not city services that get contracted out; it's governance. The city turns to Warren Christopher to get rid of Daryl Gates (successfully); to Peter Ueberroth to rebuild the inner city (in vain); to the federal courts to create a Latino seat and change the balance of power on the county Board of Supervisors. The tasks of city government no longer include the resolution of political conflicts.

Partly, that's Bradley's fault. He lost his clout when implicated in financial scandals in 1989; his majority on the council in 1987; his interest in the office around 1985. Partly, it's the fault of a city charter that creates a mayor so weak he can't fire his chief of police and a city council so strong it can roll over the mayor. And partly, it's the fault of a stunningly parochial city council, whose members concern themselves with their districts only—a task most of them define as striking the proper balance between the interests of developers and homeowner associations.

There are more things in heaven and earth, of course, than are laid out in the council's job description. The council members ignored the issue of the police department's conduct until the Christopher Commission forced them to confront it; they missed the deindustrialization of L.A. that has been roaring along since 1978; to this day, with the honorable exception of Mark Ridley-Thomas (a young, black, pragmatic liberal), they decline to participate in efforts—Ueberroth's or anyone else's—to rebuild riot-damaged areas. Extradistrict issues are beyond them. "I hadn't heard those voices before," Joel Wachs, a twenty-two-year council member who is currently running for mayor, told me this February when I asked him what he had learned from the riots of '92. "I wasn't as aware as I should have been of the way the African-American community felt about the police." Actually, the African-American community had been clamoring for years to change the police. Only a city council member could have missed it.

The missing link in all of this is politics, which has come unstuck at every level of Los Angeles life. Time was when L.A. was guided by a business elite of twenty-five developers, bankers, insurance executives and leading attorneys. But over the last couple of decades, the local economy has become so dynamic and ownership so diffused that there is little commonality of interest among the old committee's latter-day counterparts. L.A. has had no political parties since the Hiram Johnson Progressives outlawed them at the municipal level in 1911. Deunionization has exceeded deindustrialization: in the garment industry, for instance, which employs around 100,000 Angelenos, unionization hovers at 1 percent. And the increasingly tabloidized electronic media, most especially the stations owned and operated by the big three networks, largely refuse to cover local politics at all. Only by tuning in to the PBS and NPR affiliates would you even discover that there's a mayoral election. With politics nowhere to be seen, the level of voter participation since Bradley first became mayor in 1973 has fallen in each successive election—not just in percentages, but

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- ◆ Coverage must be portable.
- ◆ No cancellation due to illness.
- ◆ Choice of providers.
- ◆ Comprehensive benefits package.
- ◆ Certify health plans on ability to control costs.
- ◆ Establish real quality standards for providers.
- ◆ Purchasing pools for small business.
- ◆ Stiffen penalities for health care fraud.
- ◆ Immunize America's children.
- ◆ Reduce unneccessary paperwork.
- ◆ Expand preventive care.
- ◆ Enact medical malpractice reform.
- ◆ Cover all low-income Americans.

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in raw votes—though the city has grown by more than half a million persons during that time.

The absence of a citywide perspective on the part of L.A.'s political elites has only worsened the economic collapse—a crisis that is entirely distinct from last year's riots and the problems of the inner city. The current mantra has it that L.A. will be saved by small businesses—a reasonable enough assessment, since every large corporation in the nation is busily downsizing. Still, L.A. had an explosion in small business growth in the '80s, and it generated jobs that contributed to the bust of the '90s. Of the 600,000 new jobs created in L.A. between 1979 and 1989, labor market economist Goetz Wolff estimates, fully 40 percent paid less than $15,000 a year. That's a major reason why many of L.A.'s venerable department store chains—the Broadways and the Buffums and the Barker Brothers, targeted to the great postwar middle class—have failed, while Rodeo Drive on the high end and the 99-Cent Only stores on the low have managed to thrive.

It's this specter that galvanized much of California business behind Clintonite industrial policy last year. A business/labor/environmentalist coalition has formed to pursue certain high-tech economic strategies. In abandoned aerospace factories and among smaller electronics and precision tool contractors, consortia are springing forth for the construction of electric cars and light rail. This enthusiasm isn't confined to high-tech. Even among some of the state's more venerable corporate giants, there's a growing sense that the California comeback is more likely to flow from Clinton interventionism than from Republican laissez-faire. Some public officials—most notably San Fernando Valley Democratic Representative Howard Berman—have a played a key role in pushing these consortia along. Notably absent from these efforts have been elected officials from L.A. city government. "Industrial policy?" says one City Hall insider, appropriating a verb from Robert Heinlein. "You don't have people around here who grok this stuff."

At least a few of the people running for mayor seem to grok it, though. Woo and four of his liberal rivals—former Deputy Mayor Linda Griego, Assemblyman Richard Katz, transit honcho Nick Patsaouras and attorney Stan Sanders—are all on record favoring local industrial policies, community development banks, more vigilance against redlining, a municipal version of Clintonomics. It's unlikely that any among this gang of four will be able to dislodge Woo as the liberal front-runner, a position he's held since he surged to the front of the pack during the Rodney King-Daryl Gates wars of 1991. Woo is an uneven campaigner—capable of moving a black congregation to shouts of support; of arid, Dukakisoidal wonkisms; and of some of the most brazenly yuppified pronouncements a candidate has ever uttered. At a recent debate, the mayoral aspirants were asked where they had taken their last vacation. "Provence," chirped Woo. You could almost hear his consultants howling ten miles away. ("Michael, say 'France,' say 'France!'")

In the likely event that Woo makes the June runoff, his opponent will probably be multimillionaire Richard Riordan, a moderate Republican who's got the 35 percent of the L.A. conservative vote already nailed down but will have trouble coming up with the next 15 in this heavily Democratic city. (His platform, which is heavy on economic deregulation, won't do it.) Riordan strategy No. 1 is to campaign as the Perot-like outsider. Problem is, as the single largest donor in L.A. politics over the past decade (to candidates of both parties, often seeking the same office), Riordan personifies the permanent government—the more so since his law firm got million-dollar contracts from some of the government bodies he contributed to. Riordan's success at rallying his conservative base is clearly attributable to the $3 million he's given his own campaign. He has the chutzpah to condemn his rivals for accepting public matching funds in order to keep up with him. And—chutzpah upon chutzpah—Riordan was the largest single donor to the initiative campaign that enacted the very statute (public matching funds for municipal candidates) he now accuses his rivals of using. An improbable outsider, singularly unable to tap into public indignation at government's follies, Riordan will likely demonstrate that the oxymoron "billionaire populist" is inimitably and exclusively Perot's.

Riordan strategy No. 2 is to ride a backlash into office should a second riot sweep the city. Woo is hoping to inoculate himself by contrasting the LAPD's response under its new chief, Willie Williams, to its non-response under Gates. Having the divisive Gates (whom Riordan supported) atop the police department was a little like having a weapons arsenal comprised entirely of nuclear weapons: it was so explosive, no one dared use it.

One week before the primary voting, Woo and Riordan seem increasingly locked into their leads—chiefly because not enough people are paying attention to the race, despite the huge quantity of advertising and political mail, to alter the outcome. People's attention is riveted, of course, to the verdict and their fears of what may follow it. But it has been years since Angelenos looked to the public sphere for their salvation, and this year's mayoral campaigns have been uniformly depopulated endeavors.

Worst of all, perhaps, none of this—none of the dread, none of the disorganization—will likely subside after the verdict in the King trial has passed. Lurking around the corner is the verdict in the trial of the four African-American men accused in the beating of truck driver Reginald Denny, and the word already on the street is that that's the verdict that will touch off heavy violence. L.A. has come to resemble those premodern cities where the working class lacked both unions and parties, where fear was a constant of daily life and the riot a routine feature of politics.

HAROLD MEYERSON is executive editor of L.A. *Weekly* and a member of the editorial board of *Dissent*.

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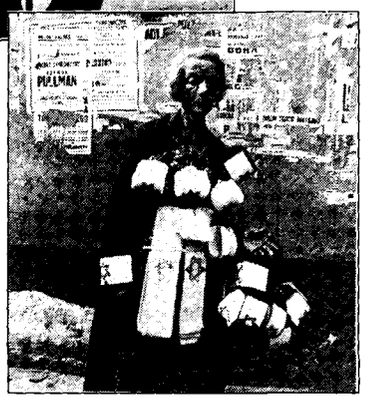

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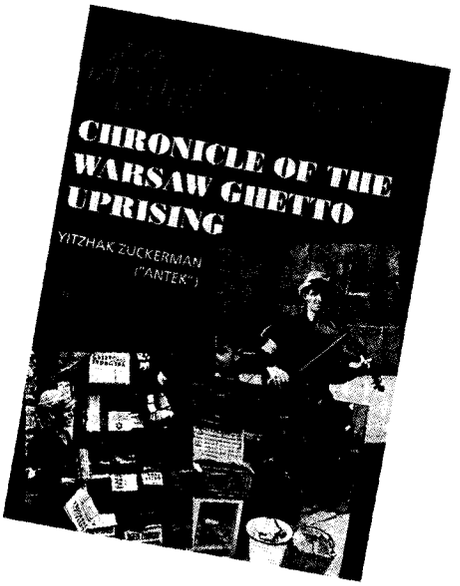

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AFTER MEMORY

By Leon Wieseltier

Dear God, let us exchange our memories—
I will recall the beginning, you will remember the end.
—A. Sutzkever

I.

Once upon a time the past was the danger. It stifled, with all its dictates and demands, all its presumptions upon the present; and so it came to be identified as a "burden" that had to be resisted. We are still living in the culture of that resistance. The instruments of resistance to the "burden" were many. There were fantasies of the past's destruction, which became plans, which became revolutions. (Which became the past, which inspired fantasies of the past's destruction, which became plans, which became revolutions.) Perhaps the unlikeliest method of beating back the past, however, was the study of history. The critical scrutiny of sacred texts that began in earnest in the seventeenth century and flourished in the nineteenth century taught a powerful lesson: that knowledge is a form of mastery. Objectivity, the principled dissociation from one's circumstances that history took from the sciences, seemed to give the knower power over the known; or at least it stole from the past some of the mystery to which it owed its authority. The detachment that originated as an ideal of science was swiftly promoted into an ideal of life. And so for a while the terror went out of the past.

But almost immediately the costs of detachment were plain. The shiny, secular, unhaunted contemporaneity that was to have remained in the wake of "the burden of the past" turned out not to inspire or to incite in quite the strenuous old way. And the deposing of the sacred in the name of history ended in the sacralization of history. History became God, the nineteenth and twentieth century's paltry contribution to the ranks of the divine; but this was a God that did not address, that could not be addressed, that was trapped in time, that never intervened except as "development," that seemed to justify any conceivable human outcome. Historical awareness became merely a modern kind of dogma; and the scholarly study of history came to seem like a desiccating activity, a means for depleting the primal energies of individuals and peoples. History seemed to lack the vitality of memory. Historiography seemed unable to nourish, to transmit the traditions that it studied to the generations that awaited them. Suddenly the past was not the danger, the past was itself in danger. And the "burden of the past" was not the problem; the real problem was the burden of the burden of the past: the dourness and the dutifulness of the historical attitude, the sense that all that remains for the heirs of the past is to recover and to record, to be grateful and custodial.

And so there arose, in reaction to the transports of historical consciousness, the modern romance of memory. Memory would battle history, for the prize of a living past. Of course, this was ironic, insofar as historiography had developed precisely as a response to the inadequacies of annals and chronicles based substantially on memory, or as a response to the fear that memories were being lost. The modern discovery of memory as a superior avenue of access to the past was made first in philosophy and literature and psychology, in Bergson and Proust and Freud, and came later to professional historians; but in recent decades it has thrown the historians, too, into a condition of crisis. Pierre Nora has nicely described the contradiction between memory and history:

> *Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past. Memory, insofar as it is affective and magical, only accommodates those facts that suit it.... History calls for analysis and criticism.... Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and relations between things. Memory is absolute, while history can only conceive the relative. At the heart of history is a critical discourse that is antithetical to spontaneous memory. History is perpetually suspicious of memory, and its true mission is to suppress and destroy it.*

Nora is a historian who takes the side of memory. It

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is, as I say, a romantic view, even an elegiac one, which longs for organic communities with seamless traditions that retain their meanings in practices and settings that sufficiently approximate the original practices and the original settings to make genuine continuity possible. There is a mystical quality to such a view of memory. About collective memory, certainly, there will always be a mystical quality, since it consists in the unaccountable capacity to remember—not to know, but to remember—things that happened to others. The Jews in particular pioneered these refreshing abolitions of time and space: it may be said that memory, in its ritual and legal and liturgical expressions, protected the Jews from history. (And from historiography, too: it was not until the spectacular dislocations of the sixteenth century that the Jewish obsession with the past issued in a methodologically strict and secularizing study of it.) A generation ago the Jew was the alienated one. Now the Jew is the one who remembers. Thus Nora, in a typical simplification: "In [the Jewish] tradition, which has no other history than its own memory, to be Jewish is to remember that one is such." Of course, there is something brackish and circular (and historically incorrect) about such a characterization of Jewish identity; but the contemporary prestige of memory appears to carry all before it. In the view of many historians and critics, it was the interference with memory, by means of the critical study of history and the reform of the ritual and liturgical carriers of memory, that left modern Judaism with a rupture that has not yet healed.

The contest between memory and history becomes acute, even excruciating, when the subject of the backward look is catastrophe. One of the many ways in which the Nazi war against the Jews was unprecedented was that it occurred in the age of historical consciousness. The savage assaults on the Jewish communities in Ashkenaz, or the Rhineland, during the Crusades of 1096 and 1146 were the first significant attempt (there was a similar attempt at extermination in Visigothic Spain, about which little is known) to wipe out an entire Jewry physically; yet the Ashkenazic literature in the wake of the atrocities is stunning for its reticence about the events. Liturgical lamentations were written, and chronicles of the events were produced that were probably also intended for liturgical use; but otherwise Jewish literature in the aftermath of the trauma is remarkable for the absence from it of any extended expression of a documentary impulse.

The atrocities of 1933-45, by contrast, were perpetrated in a culture that was drenched in historicity. Indeed, the killers themselves, animated by a philosophy of history, had a pathologically documentary mentality; they left a great deal of paper and film. (The killers' films of the killings, some of which may be seen at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, are a rape of the eye.) And lying in wait for the historical consciousness of the killers was the historical consciousness of the survivors and the scholars. They proceeded swiftly to produce a body of evidence of the genocide that is staggering in its size and its sophistication. The historiography of the Holocaust was an act of intellectual heroism, not least because it was the intention of the Nazis to make precisely such a historiography impossible. They weirdly believed that they could cover the traces of their crime, that the evidence of the death of the Jews would die with the Jews. "Among ourselves it should be mentioned quite frankly," Himmler told a group of S.S. officials in Poznan in 1943,

> and yet we will never speak of it publicly.... Most of you must know what it means when a hundred corpses are lying side by side or five hundred or a thousand. To have stuck it out and at the same time—apart from exceptions caused by human weakness—to have remained decent men, that is what has made us hard. This is a page of glory in our history, which has never been written and is never to be written.

But some of Himmler's victims were, in their way, also hard. The historiographical labor was begun by the victims themselves, in the Warsaw Ghetto and elsewhere. The page was written, though not quite as Himmler would have written it. In the war between History and history, history won.

In assembling the record of the Nazi war against the Jews, moreover, history and memory worked together. The survivors brought precise pain and the scholars brought painful precision. Without betraying its own methods, history approached memory's proximity to its subject. It was, in Nora's admiring term, "concrete." To be sure, the rise of "Holocaust Studies" and its professionalization has had a certain anesthetizing effect; the chat of these experts can chill your bones. (In the historian of evil, however, intellectual poise is a spiritual accomplishment.) Yet soon the survivors will be gone, and only the scholars will remain. It is no longer true, as the ancient Indian saying has it, that an event lives only as long as the last person who remembers it; the historians have stalled oblivion. Still, it will not be long before we find ourselves in a more customary, more distant, more mediated, more indirect relationship to the Holocaust.

Will we mourn the loss of memory? Will the loss of memory mean the loss of the past? "We speak so much of memory," Nora writes ruefully, "because there is so little of it." Well, yes; the elders die. The slippage of immediacy is inevitable. (For the survivors of the catastrophe, of course, this slippage is an easing, a passing into peace.) Not least for this reason, we had better be careful about the idealization of memory, and the disparagement of the historical attitude.

But there are other reasons, too. Remembering is the twin of forgetting. Memory is not retention, it is selection. (Memory is precisely what a computer does *not* have.) The memory of an event is an interpretation of an event; and the interpretation may be beautiful, or moving, or necessary for a certain end, but it leaves

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the mind with work to be done. The traffic between memory and history is a traffic between magic and doubt. Without magic, there is no continuity; without doubt, there is no contemporaneity. Traditions decay or disappear if they are not remembered, but they do not flourish in the hands of those who live in the past. And memory, too, may cloud or clog one's view of one's time. Even when it is true, memory is demagogic. It compels; but the world is not suffering from too little compulsion. And so the brake of history is not a bad thing.

And sometimes memory alienates more powerfully than history; or rather, it is too inalienable to be of any use. Memory is not always, or only, an instrument of knowledge; it is also a confinement, an irreversible sentence of individuation. Listen to a survivor, say, at a kitchen table in Brooklyn recall her experiences of Poland, 1943. If you grasp the meaning, you will grasp the distance. You are being addressed across a gulf, through a thick wall of glass, from the farthest corner of a banished heart. You listen carefully, but an approximation of her experience is the best you can hope for. And the love that you feel for this woman makes the sense of impassability even harder to bear. You begin to understand that there are situations in which memory is not a privilege, in which history is preferable to memory: if history is your only source of knowledge about the darkness, then you were one of the lucky ones. You look at this woman in the work of recollection and you no longer remark on the beauty of memory, or on its utility for the perpetuation of the knowledge of the disaster, you wish only that memory would falter and die, and you bless the moments of forgetfulness and all the divagations of ordinary life after the end of the world.

TOOTHBRUSHES LEFT AT AUSCHWITZ

Memory, in sum, is not only authentic, and radiant, and poetic. It is also hurtful, and fragile ("who, after all," asked Hitler, "speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?"), and, in a strict sense, untransmittable. Therefore it needs the fortifyings of history: the corrections, the comparisons, the conclusions. (Memory is color, history is line.) The first of the many accomplishments of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, which opens this week on the Mall in Washington, is the paradox of its name: a memorial museum, a house of memory *and* history. Here the vividness of recollection joins the sturdiness of research. The stinging subjectivity of the testimonies of the survivors is met in these galleries by the tart objectivity of photographs, films, maps, statistics and objects.

In the creation of a memorial, moreover, there is another reason that memory must be accompanied by history, and feeling must be annotated by fact; and that is the fickleness of memorials themselves. These things shed their meanings with almost cynical alacrity. The public spaces of modern cities are littered with figures and markers that are more or less illegible. Their opacity is itself a kind of release from the particulars of the past. Instead of history, they give a warm sensation of historicity. They say only: once there was someone who wanted something remembered here. Before these figures and markers nobody any longer stops, or thinks, or shudders. They are bulwarks against thought, devices for the prevention of any intrusion of the past into the present. "There is nothing in this world as invisible as a monument," wrote Robert Musil: "They are no doubt erected to be seen—indeed, to attract attention. But at the same time they are impregnated with something that repels attention, causing the glance to roll right off, like water droplets off an oilcloth, without even pausing for a moment.... This can no doubt be explained. Anything that endures over time sacrifices its ability to make an impression. Anything that constitutes the walls of our life, the backdrop of our consciousness, so to speak, forfeits its capacity to play a role in that consciousness."

The proliferation of Holocaust memorials in the United States poses the problem starkly. The banality of the memory of evil, you might call it. According to James E. Young, in an interesting survey of Holocaust memorials called *The Texture of Memory*, just published by Yale University Press, "Today, nearly every major American city is home to at least one, and often several, memorials commemorating aspects of the Holocaust." This is affecting, and this is revolting. It certainly makes the fear that the Holocaust will be forgotten seem faintly ridiculous. And worse, it ensures that if the Holocaust is forgotten, or if it is pushed to the peripheries of consciousness and culture, then it will be partly owing to the memorials themselves, which will have made the horror familiar and thereby robbed it of its power to shock and to disrupt. Of the memorial in Tucson, Young writes that "the monument now functions as the architectural entryway visitors pass through

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on their way into a stunning complex of auditoriums, cavernous gymnasiums, weight rooms, swimming pools and tennis courts. Built as it is into the wall and the plaza, the memorial houses and thus lends a certain cast to all the activities that take place in the center." The Raoul Wallenberg Tennis Classic?

Remembering saves; but it also salves. Too little memory dishonors the catastrophe; but so does too much memory. In the contemplation of the death camps, we must be strangers; and if we are not strangers, if the names of the killers and the places of the killing and the numbers of the killed fall easily from our tongues, then we are not remembering to remember, but remembering to forget. Of course, the banalization of the memory serves many purposes. It suits the poverty of American Jewishness. "It's a sad fact," said the principal philanthropist of the grotesque Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, "that Israel and Jewish education and all the other familiar buzzwords no longer seem to rally Jews behind the community. The Holocaust, though, works every time." His candor was refreshing, even if it was obscene. On the subject of the extermination of the Jews of Europe, the Jews of America are altogether too noisy. They need the subject too much. Those Jews of the Rhineland in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries who omitted their experience of atrocity from so many of their liturgical verses and legal rulings and pietistic sermons and mystical speculations had not forgotten it. Indeed, they were, in their commemorations of their martyrs, the inventors of Jewish morbidity in the Diaspora. But their Jewishness was too great for their morbidity to overwhelm.

Between 14th Street and 15th Street in Washington, the memorial will be saved from the fate of memorials by the museum, and the museum will be saved from the fate of museums by the memorial. The designers of this institution have made a provision for shock. One of the achievements of the Holocaust Memorial Museum is that it leads its visitors directly from history to silence. Its exhibition ends in a Hall of Remembrance, a six-sided, classically proportioned chamber of limestone, a chaste vacancy, seventy feet high, unencumbered by iconography, washed in a kind of halting light, in a light that seems anxious about its own appropriateness. There are steps all around the cold marble floor that will most likely serve as seats. The least that you can do, after seeing what you have just seen, is sit down and be still.

The Hall of Remembrance is a temple of ineffability. This, then, is the plot, the historical and spiritual sequence got right, of the infernal display on the Mall: memory, stiffened by history, then struck dumb.

II.

The museum is a pedagogical masterpiece. It begins at the beginning and it ends at the end. It illustrates the sufferings of all who suffered. It resists the rhetoric about *Shoah v'Gvurah*, Holocaust and Heroism, as if there was as much heroism as there was holocaust. It does not prettify or protect the visitor from the worst. (Nazi footage of killings in the pits, and of medical experiments in the camps, is shown on monitors behind walls that are too high for children to see over. Adults may wish that the walls were higher still.) And it does not conclude its narrative in triumph. There was no triumph, at least for the Jews. There was a narrow escape, that is all. The Nazis did not win their war against the Jews. But they did not lose it, either.

The building itself teaches. It seems to have been distilled, but not abstracted, from its subject. Its principal materials are brick and steel and brick bolted with steel. The exhibits are located in eight towers, each topped by a kind of sentry box, which surround a huge atrium, into which you enter. The impression is elegant and oppressive. The industrial atmosphere is ominous. This is an atrium without air; it holds the opposite of air, the end of air. A staircase that looks like a railroad track rises into a wall of black marble, into which a doorway has been cut and set in brick in the shape of the entrance to Birkenau, which was the killing center at Auschwitz. The skylight, too, puts you in mind of a train station, until you begin to notice that this gigantic frame of steel is warped, twisted, a derangement of rational design. Above the skylight, from one of the glass bridges that connect the towers, the deformity is truly terrifying. The building seems to be held together by what is tearing it apart. Like survivors; like Jews.

A large part of the instruction that this museum imparts is tactile. Alongside the maps and the charts and the films and the photographs, there are the objects, the stuff, the things of the persecutions and the murders. The museum is a kind of reliquary. The relics are sacred and profane; and while there are things in the world more sacred, there surely are none more profane. Here is the blackened metal chassis on which corpses were burned at Mauthausen when the ovens were too full to receive them, and here are the canisters and the crystals of Zyklon-B gas. Here is a pile of umbrellas and tea strainers and can openers and toothbrushes that Jews brought to Auschwitz. Here is the wooden frame of the ark that held the Torah scrolls in the synagogue at Essen, stabbed and scratched and scarred across the words that warned the worshiper to remember before Whom he stood, provoking now an almost Christian desire to touch the wound. Here is a madly detailed model of the Lodz Ghetto sculpted out of a suitcase by a Jew in hiding. Here is what remains of a Mauser rifle and a Steyn pistol used by Jewish fighters in the Warsaw Ghetto. Here is a Danish fishing boat that carried hundreds of Jews to safety. (Here you smile. It is the only spot in the building where you do.)

Perhaps the most startling passage in Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* was its reconstruction of the trajectory of a killing van in Chelmno, because it was filmed in real

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time: nothing was abridged or abbreviated, the van was filmed along the local roads for exactly as long as it would have taken for the gas in the van to kill the people inside it. In the Holocaust Memorial Museum, there is real space. Here is a railway car, of the Karlsruhe kind, number 31599-G, and in this railway car Jews were carried to the death camps. The freight car weighs fifteen tons; its ceiling is mean and low, with four small slatted windows and iron bolts on its doors. It carried about a hundred Jews every time it traveled. Now, in the semidarkness of an exhibition hall in America, you stand inside it, and are defeated. Its wooden walls are thoroughly scratched and splintered, and to every scratch and splinter you ascribe a panicked hand. Though it is empty, it feels crowded and cramped. You wish that you could smell a human smell, but there is only the smell of old wood, and a general stench of technocratic efficiency. It occurs to you that you are standing in a coffin. It also occurs to you that there are survivors visiting this museum who may find themselves in this coffin for the second time.

CUTLERY LEFT AT AUSCHWITZ

And here are barracks from Auschwitz. More real space. More old wood. The living quarters of the dying. The prisoners slept, whatever that means, six in a row, on three levels. You realize, looking at these structures, that they may have given respite, but they never gave rest. The wood is hard, and unexpectedly smooth to the touch; it appears to have been polished by all the flesh that passed over it. There is no room to sit up or to stretch out. Here men, or what was left of men, were merely stored in rows for the night. You try to imagine the desolation of returning in the evening to these planks. And you keep running your hands over them, because their materiality wakens you. It reminds you that all this dying was lived.

But lived by whom? The conventional answer is: by Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, Communists, Jehovah's Witnesses and so on. But those appellations describe groups, not individuals; and when, in the remembrance of the catastrophe, the victims are seen as individuals, it is usually in the period between the completion of their life and the completion of their death, in the purgatory between the ramp and the oven, as starved, naked, shaved, numbered, emaciated men and women whose physical extremity, and its fearful inscription in their faces, makes you stop before the photographs and consider them one by one. By that time, however, these people were already gone; they were just not yet dead. The victims of the Holocaust are known too much by the manner of their death.

In the museum on the Mall, however, there is a tower of photographs, three stories high. They are photographs of the Jews of Ejszyszki, a town in Lithuania. Jews lived in Ejszyszki for 900 years, until 1941, when the Jewish community of Ejszyszki was shot to death in two days. (There were more than 4,950 cities, towns, villages, and hamlets in which the Nazis and their Polish, Ukrainian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Estonian, Slovakian, Hungarian, and Croatian accomplices destroyed the Jewish population.) In the years before the war, four local photographers set out to produce a pictorial record of the Jews of Ejszyszki; and now their pictures rise high into the tranquil brick tower, rows and rows of them, all around you, in black and white and sepia, and finally you see *who died.*

There are gymnasts and teachers and merchants and rabbis and nannies and writers and carpenters. There are preening male bathers by the sea; humorless Zionist activists of the right and the left; families in gloomy, paneled interiors, gathered around tables heavy with cutlery and cakes; cantors, looking silly in the cantorial way, assembled for their graduation; a girl and a boy lazing on a hammock in the woods; a rabbi in wrinkled gabardine strolling up a hill, his hands behind his back and his text in his head; a man in a Mickey Mouse suit on bended knee before a slightly startled girl in a park; a group of young women smartly turned out to ski; a father propping his son up on his shiny new car.

One picture crushed me. A girl sits, her legs crossed, on a sofa. She wears a woolen cap and a plaid shirt and a long skirt pulled tightly over her thighs and (in Ejszyszki!) cowboy boots. She is in her teens. In her hand is a cigarette. On the wall above her hangs a picture of a dashing, medieval-looking cavalier. And close to her, very close to her, sits a young man in a rocking chair. He looks nothing like the cavalier. He seems a little bookish, in glasses and jacket and tie. She bends toward him confidently and confidently he lights her cigarette. They do not look like they are lovers, though they might be lovers. They do not look like they are going to die, though they are going to die.

That is what is missing from so many accounts of the

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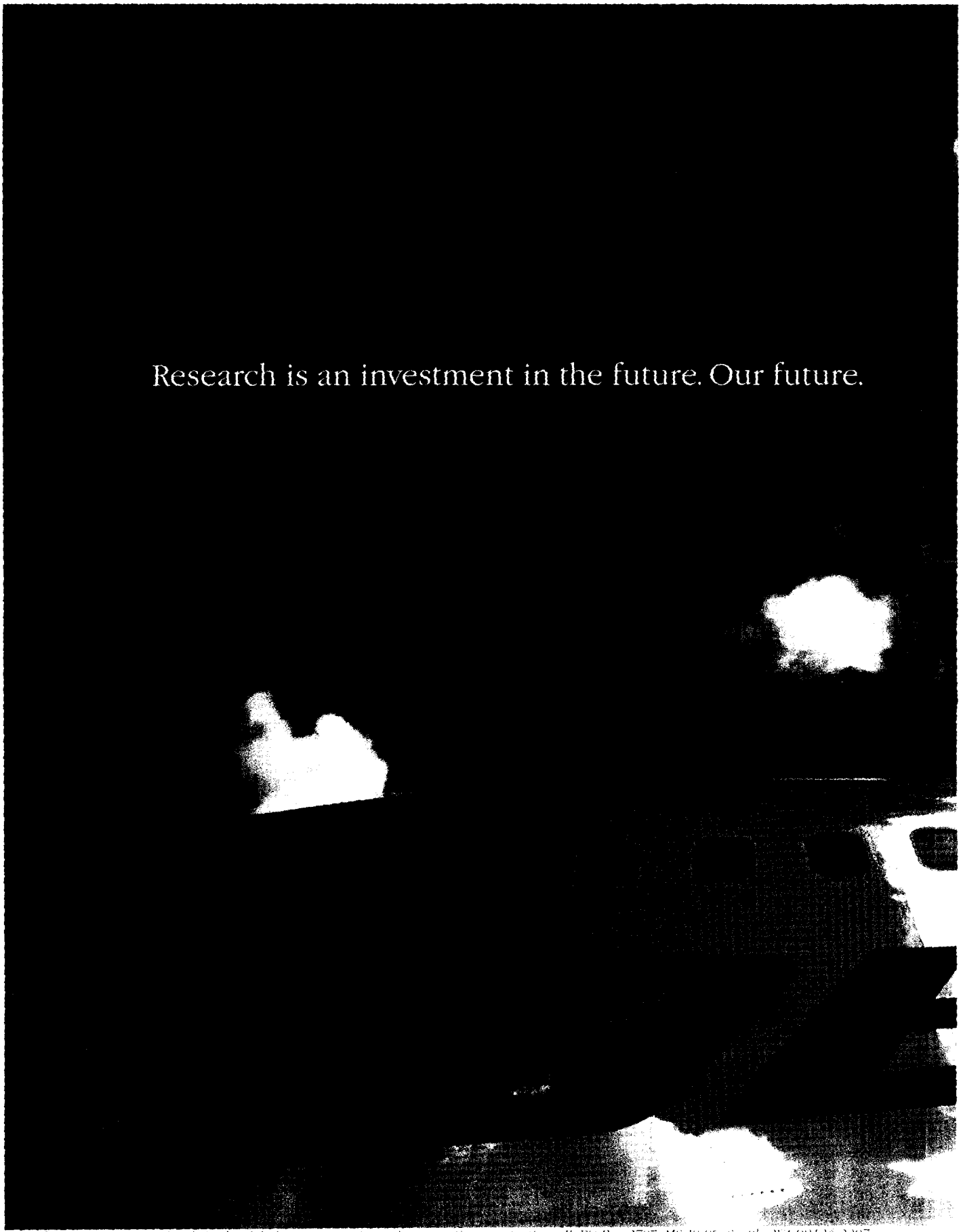

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end of Jewish life in Europe: the eros of Jewish life in Europe before the end. These slaughtered Jews loved the world. They were at home in it, exile or no exile. The melancholy in the tradition that they inherited seems not to have sapped them. Their piety and their impiety were equally robust. Around the thousands of people in these hundreds of photographs there is not a trace of the angel of death. Only the contemporary viewer sees it hovering, impatiently, in every frame. And for that reason there is no room in this great and grisly building that you visit more bitterly. In the other rooms, the ones that show death, you learn the lesson of finality. In this room, the one that shows life, you learn the lesson of perishability. I am not sure which lesson is the harder one. How do you choose between sorrow and fear?

III.

In the weeks leading up to the opening of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, Germany was nervous. According to Marc Fisher in *The Washington Post*, the German government offered the museum "millions of dollars" to include an exhibit on postwar Germany and its decades of democracy. The government's press spokesman immediately denied that such an offer was made, but he added that "the federal government would have welcomed it if the museum had included information on German resistance to National Socialism [it does] as well as on the successful construction of a state based on the rule of law and of a liberal democracy in postwar Germany." A historian in Munich who acts as an informal adviser to Helmut Kohl observed that "it would have been good for educational reasons to show that Germany has changed since 1945. It was a mistake for the museum not to include other cases of genocide." A writer in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* observed that the museum's emphasis on gas chambers and death camps "has less to do with the German past than with the American present"; and the paper's Washington correspondent wondered whether "half a century after war's end it is advisable to lead millions of visitors through a museum that ends in 1945 and thereby may leave the lasting impression [that] these are the Germans and this is Germany."

There is something comic about the Germans asking the Jews to help them with the image of what the Germans did to the Jews. Finally, though, the comedy is thin. This complaint, that a true depiction of the German war against the Jews is an expression of hostility to Germany, has been heard before. When *Shoah* appeared, it was attacked for its uncomplicated attitude toward the killers, for its unembarrassed hatred of the Germans it filmed. Now, in the dark halls of the museum on the Mall, as you file by these pictures of German doctors in their laboratory coats posing over their fascinating corpses, and German soldiers politely escorting women into the woods, and German officers smiling as they put a bullet into the head of a Jew perched at the edge of a pit, the problem of hatred will be posed again. And so I would like to say a few things in defense of hatred.

First, that hatred is not always the enemy of, or the obstacle to, understanding. Sometimes, and certainly in the instance of radical evil, hatred may be evidence that a state of affairs has been properly understood. I will give, as an example, the report of an atrocity that broached this problem for me many years ago. When I was a boy, I was told of a Nazi satrap in Galicia, in Poland, in the early 1940s, who picked up a Jewish baby by its legs and tore it apart. My sense of the world has not yet recovered from that anecdote. I remember vividly my response. It was hatred: hatred of the man, hatred of the deed, hatred of the circumstances in which the deed could have been committed.

I was, as I say, a boy; but when I reflect now upon that man, and that deed, and those circumstances, I do not conclude that my hatred was something that I must overcome, for the purpose of a more accurate or a more humane analysis. Quite the contrary. Were I not to hate that man, and that deed, and those circumstances, or were I left in confusion about whether or not I should hate them, there would be reason to wonder whether I had understood what I had been told, I mean the plain meaning of the story, or worse, whether I had understood what we mean by understanding, that is, the axioms by which our civilization orders and evaluates human experience. There would have been reason to wonder, in short, whether I was what we call a moral idiot.

That epithet quite properly links judgment to intelligence. Not to recognize moral idiocy, however, is itself a form of moral idiocy. If, by hatred, we mean an attitude of condemnation accompanied by an intensity of feeling, then the absence of hatred in the face of radical evil would constitute not merely an ethical failure, but also an intellectual one. If I had not hated the Nazis, I would not have understood them. The relations between knowing and judging are complicated; the empirical and the moral cannot be easily disentangled. It is not always true that *tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner*. Comprehension does not always lead to forgiveness. In certain cases, indeed, forgiveness may signify the absence of comprehension. The hatred of the Jew for the Nazi was not just a feeling, it was the emotional expression of a correct analysis of the position of the Jew in the Nazi world.

Nor is all hatred like all other hatred. There is, I suppose, a similarity of the surface—a man who hates is more like a man who hates than a man who loves—just as there is a similarity of the surface between the Nazi who killed a Jew and the Jew who killed a Nazi. They were, both of them, killers. But distinctions must be made. There was a difference between the hatred of the Nazi for the Jew and the hatred of the Jew for the Nazi. The Nazi hated the Jew because he believed

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that the Jew was not human. The Jew hated the Nazi because he believed that the Nazi was human, but had betrayed his humanity. The Jewish hatred, Lanzmann's hatred, the hatred that you feel in this museum before, say, the German film of the massacre at Libau in Lithuania, is premised finally on the assumption of a commonality between the oppressed and the oppressor, and it amounts to a defense of that commonality against those who would deny it.

There were also decent and brave Germans who tried to resist the Nazis and to assist the Jews. The failure to acknowledge and to honor those Germans amounts to a notion of collective guilt, which is a very Nazi notion. Contrary to its German critics, the Holocaust Memorial Museum acknowledges the German heroes and honors them. In this respect, moreover, Lanzmann's critics were right: it *was* disgraceful that none of the dissenters and the rescuers appeared in his film. But, I hasten to add, it was only a little disgraceful. There is the matter of proportions. The few, however admirable, were not the equal, or the exoneration, of the many. The historical truth is brutal. It may be simplistic, but it is not false, to describe these events in Europe between 1933 and 1945 as an attempt by a people called the Germans to destroy a people called the Jews. The assault on the Jews was, actively and passively, a collective assault. It is a distortion of the past to deny the dissenters and the rescuers a place in the history of the catastrophe; but it is also a distortion to give them a pride of place.

RAZORS LEFT AT AUSCHWITZ

There is more. Just as hatred is not necessarily an intellectual failure, it is not necessarily a moral failure. In the debate about *Shoah*, it was suggested that Lanzmann's hatred of the evildoers made him resemble them. He, too, it was said, was making absolute distinctions between human beings. As one of the critics wrote, "If one sees no resemblance between self and other, and believes all evil to be in the other and none in oneself, one is (tragically) condemned to imitating one's enemy. If, on the other hand, one discovers one's resemblance to the enemy, and recognizes the evil in oneself as well as the good in the other, then one is truly different from the enemy." There is nobility in these words, and perversity: the executed had about as much in common with the executioners as the dead had in common with the living.

It is odd, this worry about the virtue of the victims. ("It would have been more fair and more open," wrote the historian from Munich about the museum in Washington, "to show that Jews care about other acts of genocide.") I wonder how many of those who preach this loftiness about the evil in all of us have considered the extent to which it would damage the capacity for resistance to evil. What, exactly, does the evil of another time or another place have to do with the evil of this time and this place, except to inhibit the fight against it? Can devils be opposed only by saints? The conclusion of such reasoning is *fiat justitia pereant Judeii*: let justice be done and the Jews perish. In 1943 such reasoning led Simone Weil to the outrageous insistence that France's colonies robbed it of the moral authority to fight Germany. Surely the difference between the man who points the gun and the man at whom the gun is pointed is greater, at least at the moment of their encounter, than the similarity between them. It is trivial at any moment, and it is grotesque at that moment, to point out that one day the relation may be reversed because there is evil in all of us. Of course there is evil in all of us; but not all of us act on our evil.

On April 13, 1943, in the Warsaw Ghetto, Emanuel Ringelblum entered these words in his diary:

> Spent the two Passover nights at Schachna's. There was an interesting discussion about vengeance. Mr. Isaac, who had been interned in a prison camp in Pomerania, demonstrated that vengeance would never solve anything. The vanquished would in turn plan their own vengeance, and so it would go on forever. There was talk that raising the moral level of humanity was the only solution.

Mr. Isaac's idealism is heartbreaking. But Ringelblum was skeptical. His gloss on the discussion at the seder introduces a different moral voice. "The Jewish revenge [is] that the Jews are very forgiving. The Germans are only people after all"—and then he adds, "except for the Gestapo!" Do those final four words diminish Ringelblum ethically? Do they catch him in a resemblance to his enemy? I do not think so. For the Gestapo were not "only people." His exclusion of them from his sense of humanity indicated only that he had understood them properly.

It also allowed him to act against them. If knowing did not run into judging, if critical thought did not make way for moral action, then the triumph of the Nazis over the Jews would have been total. But Ringel-

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blum became one of the organizers of the revolt in the Warsaw Ghetto, which took place ten days later. And on March 7, 1944, he was executed, with his wife and his son, in the ruins of the ghetto. The Holocaust Memorial Museum opened in Washington on the fiftieth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto revolt, and the milk can that hid Ringelblum's archive of the ghetto may be found on the second floor. For its faithfulness, its color of rust has turned a color of gold.

IV.

But why this museum, and this memorial, on the Mall?

The question is not a new one. In 1946, A. R. Lerner, a Viennese journalist who fled the Nazis and came to New York, where he tirelessly spread the news of what the Nazis had done to the Jews, proposed that a monument to the "Heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto and the Six Million Jews Slain by the Nazis" be established in New York. Mayor O'Dwyer and Parks Commissioner Moses agreed, and the sculptor Jo Davidson chose a spot in Riverside Park. (I take this tale from Young's book.) On October 10, 1947, thousands of people came to Riverside Park to dedicate the site. *The New York Times* wrote the following day that "it is fitting that a memorial to 6 million victims of the most tragic mass crime in history, the Nazi genocide of Jews, should rise in this land of liberty." But the monument was never raised, not least because the opinion of the *Times* was not shared by everyone. In 1964, when a design for the monument was submitted to the city's Arts Commission, one of the commissioners, the sculptor Eleanor Platt, declared that it would "set a highly regrettable precedent. How would we answer other special groups who want to be similarly represented on public land?" And Newbold Morris, the city's parks commissioner, further objected that "monuments in the parks should be limited to events of American history."

The proposal to create a museum and a memorial to the Holocaust on the Mall in Washington, on the hallowed ground of the American republic, was similarly controversial. In 1987 the architecture critic of *The Washington Post*, in a churlish column called "In Search of a Delicate Balance," repeated Morris's objection, and worried about "the symbolic implications of the memorial's placement—that the Nazi extermination of 6 million Jews [could be considered] an integral part of the American story." Of course, nobody ever suggested that the Holocaust was an event in American history. What the delicate balancer seems to have forgotten, however, is that this is a country of immigrants. The past of America is elsewhere. (Here the past *is* a foreign country.) The collective memory of this country will always include names and dates foreign and far away. Pluralism makes demands on the imagination.

And yet the objection is not hard to understand. This is a tolerant country, but it is not an innocent country. It is permanently stained with the fate of the Native Americans and the African Americans; and neither the memories nor the histories of those wretched Americans may be met on the Mall. And there are still other genocides that haunt still other Americans—the Armenians, for example—that are unacknowledged. (A home to all the peoples of the world is a home to all the scars of the world.) For a time there was talk of a separate wing in the Holocaust Memorial Museum that would document and commemorate all the catastrophes, but the wing was never built.

It is now clear that a Hall of Genocide would have been a ghastly mistake, a macabre multiculturalist insult to the memories of all. For the most lasting impression that the Holocaust Memorial Museum leaves is of human foulness. This building interferes not only with your opinion of Germany, or Europe, or Western civilization; it interferes with your opinion of the human world. A Jew who wanders through these galleries feels pity for his people turn into pity for his race. There occurs a general darkening of outlook. For there is a sickening sense in which a corpse is a human being that has been returned to its sheerest humanity; there is something truly universal about a corpse. Anybody who looks at these images of corpses and sees only images of Jews has a grave moral problem.

It is true, as Jewish historians and theologians have argued, that the Holocaust was in some way "unique"; but it was in no way so "unique" that it does not press upon the souls of all who learn of it. The story of the life and the death of the Jews in Europe is one of the great human stories (which, by the way, is also one of the reasons that Jews should study it). I am not sure that the memory of that story, or the history of it, will suffice to stay the hand of the malicious and the murderous, or that a museum and a memorial will stand much in the way of prejudice and its appetite for power. The world fifty years later does not seem especially restrained by the world fifty years before. Still, it is not just Jews who will be warned by what they see in this building on the Mall. All are warned. Here is the precedent. Just because it was the worst does not mean that it will be the last.

And so it is right that the first thing you notice, when you leave the Hall of Remembrance, is the figure of Thomas Jefferson. Across the calming waters of the Tidal Basin he presides perdurably over his own memorial, an architect of the only political system in the history of the world that made men free without thinking too highly of them. You think, in the light of what you have just seen, that it was no small achievement to found a democracy upon a pessimistic view of human nature. And you think, in the light of what you have just seen, that it was just as well. •

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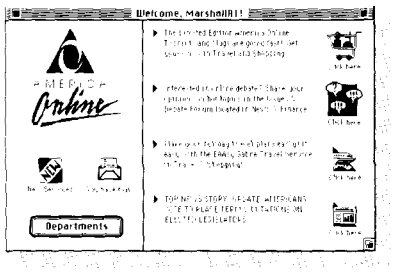

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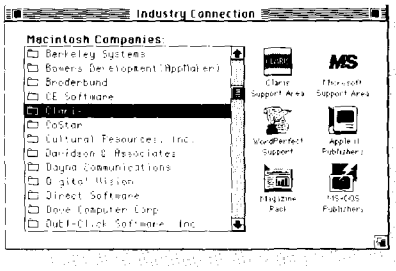

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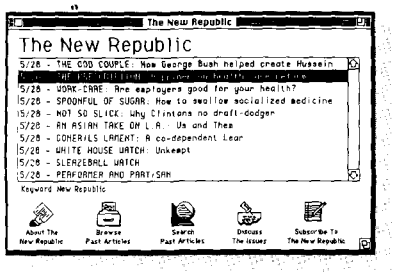
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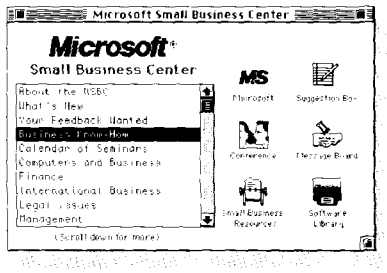

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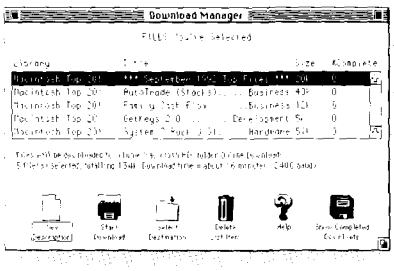

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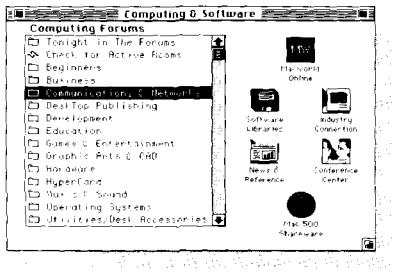

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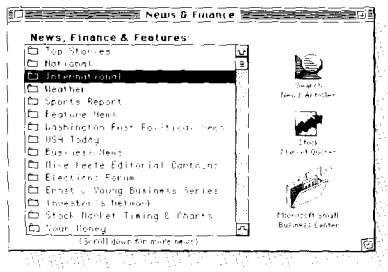

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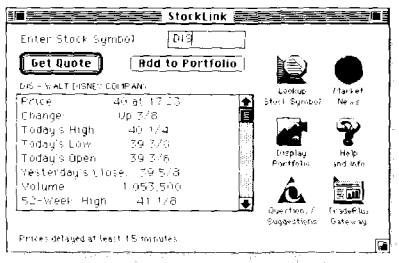

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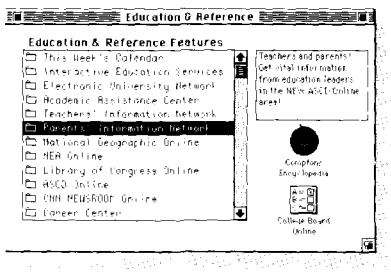

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Primness Redefined

A new propriety is with us. Or rather, a propriety that rose in the last four decades or so has now been extended.

From time to time, I've deplored the explicit sex scenes in films, arguing that the explicitness is usually there just because it's now allowed to be there, that it adds nothing to story or characterization. This explicitness is now so common that it's rarely discussed except by film-rating boards. What seems to be operating in this matter, with critics and public, is a latter-day stern propriety. Where our forebears were proud of their suppression of sexual reference, we are proud of our suppression of any opposition to sexual reference.

Heterosexual reference. Now the propriety is extended to homosexuality. The latest instance is a Japanese film, **Okoge** (Cinevista). The title is the Japanese slang term for a woman who enjoys the company of gay men. The *okoge* here is Sayoko, a young Tokyo woman who, through two coincidences, becomes acquainted with a pair of male lovers: Goh, a young leather craftsman, and Tochi, a middle-aged businessman with a wife and family. (The film's writer-director, Takehiro Nakajima, 58 years old, left his wife and children eight years ago to live an openly gay life.)

One holiday weekend, when the two men cannot find a vacant room in a hotel, Sayoko offers them her apartment. The two men accept the offer, and Sayoko's apartment becomes their rendezvous until Tochi's wife discovers her husband's predilection and raises a tempest.

That storm leads to changes in the lives of the three principals. Goh and Tochi no longer meet at Sayoko's place. She, through a misunderstanding related to Goh, becomes the lover of another man and bears him a child. Tochi loses his family and job and goes to live in the world of gay bars. At the last Sayoko and her child move into Goh's apartment. She has her wish: to live (platonically) with a gay. Goh fulfills what is said to be a gay's dream: to have a son.

As outlined above, this is, or could be, a story of some interest. Nakajima is an experienced T.V. and film writer and has directed one previous picture: *Okoge* is not an amateurish scramble to plaster experience on the screen. But the outline, even more than usually so, is not the sum. When the two men first use Sayoko's apartment, we see a very extensive sequence of their love-making (intercut with shots of Sayoko in the next room leafing through a book of Frida Kahlo paintings). The love-making, though not complete, is detailed and protracted. And there are more such scenes throughout.

I felt that I was being jostled into watching these scenes, just as I've often felt with heterosexual scenes, because the filmmaker is exploiting the new permissiveness and is confident that the new propriety will stifle objection. The sexual details added absolutely nothing to the story or theme. (However, when Goh makes his one sexual attempt with a woman—not Sayoko—the details are not shown, merely recounted.)

More propriety. There's a sequence in a gay nightclub in which a drag queen urinates into a beer mug, then sings the "Libiamo" air from *Traviata* while he sips from the mug, then sits with friends and keeps sipping while he extols the drink. No review I've seen has mentioned this episode.

This new propriety possibly affects reviews in other ways. *Okoge* has been lavishly praised in several countries. I'm forced to wonder whether these critics felt an ethical compulsion to hail what seemed to this unethical critic an ordinarily competent job of directing, with adequate but unmemorable acting and a discursive screenplay.

Sayoko, despite the film's title, is the least explored of the principal characters. One quick flashback tells us of a sexual attempt on her by a foster father. Is that meant to explain her? Her coupling with her child's father is based on the fact that Goh desires this man; she acts as Goh's vicar. But what her own social-sexual life is like, why she enjoys the company of gays, why she relishes the thought of homosexual love in the next room—all this is blank. We know a great deal more about Goh and Tochi.

I'm aware of the risks in raising these subjects. In 1966 I wrote two articles in *The New York Times* whose intent was to indict society for declining to let homosexual playwrights write openly about their lives. (Yes, those were the social conditions only twenty-seven years ago.) Recurrently through the years, right up to 1992, those articles have been attacked as homophobic by the obtuse, by selective quoters, by those who arbi-

FILMS WORTH SEEING

The Last Days of Chez Nous. *Bruno Ganz surrounded by lovely women in an Australian comedy-drama of marital cross-currents. Interesting until it gets consciously dramatic. (Reviewed 3/29/93)* **Rich in Love.** *Gentle, amusing, sufficiently wise. A South Carolina man with two grown daughters adjusts to his wife's abdication.* Viva *Albert Finney! (4/5/93)* **Stolen Children.** *An 11-year-old Italian girl, prostituted by her mother, is sent with her younger brother from Milan to a home in Sicily, accompanied by a young policeman. No sentimentality. Emotional truth. (3/22/93)* **Visions of Light.** *Twenty-six accomplished cinematographers, interviewed, with samples of their work. Only regret: this documentary could have been longer and deeper. (4/26/93)* **—SK**

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trarily divide all discussion of the subject into the friendly or the inimical. Possibly this present article will be thought homophobic. But rigid propriety is rigid propriety, whichever side it's on, and should be noted.

While watching **Indecent Proposal** (Paramount), which stars Robert Redford, I thought of Jack Nicholson. I had just shown *Five Easy Pieces* in a film course, had chosen it chiefly for Nicholson's performance and had again been overwhelmed by it. This was especially true retrospectively, after seeing the recent *Hoffa*, in which, whatever one thought of the film as a whole, he was tremendous. (He got an Oscar nomination for the lesser of his two performances last year, in *A Few Good Men.*)

Seeing Nicholson's earlier film again underscored thrillingly what a strong talent he is, an American asset, and how, in the middle of a Nibelung industry, he has managed to *grow.* He has been in some sorry clinkers, certainly, but think of *The Last Detail, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, Chinatown, Terms of Endearment, Ironweed.*

Then think of Redford. He became a big star about the same time as Nicholson and began, like Nicholson, as an actor. In *The Candidate* he was superb. In *Jeremiah Johnson, The Sting, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, All the President's Men,* he was really engaged. But in so many films in recent years—*The Electric Horseman, Legal Eagles, Havana*—he hasn't seemed to care particularly which film he was in. He turned up, delivered the star goods and departed. The last thing one could say of Redford, as actor, is that he has grown.

And now here he is in something about a multibillionaire who, at Las Vegas, encounters an impecunious but devoted young couple and offers them a million dollars for one night with the wife. The plot (reminiscent, anyway, of *Honeymoon in Vegas*) is too flimsy even to mock; yet there is Redford, encased in it, starring away in a semi-interested manner.

I hope that his social activisms—ecological and Native American causes—and his sponsorship of the Sundance Institute are gratifying him. The public is paying for them and not getting much, from him, for its money. •

The Road Leads Far Away

By Irving Howe

A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising by Yitzhak Zuckerman translated by Barbara Harshav

(University of California Press, 702 pp., $35)

This unforgettable book contains the memoirs of Yitzhak Zuckerman, a leader of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, which took place exactly fifty years ago this April. Zuckerman, who used the pseudonym "Antek" in the underground, was among the handful of Jewish fighters who survived the rebellion. After the war he settled in Israel, and in the early 1970s he dictated his memoirs while living in the Ghetto Fighters Kibbutz in the Galilee. He died in 1981 at the age of 66. His memoirs have now been translated and edited, superbly, by Barbara Harshav, who provides almost all the auxiliary information a reader might need. (The one thing missing is a map of Warsaw and its environs.)

A Surplus of Memory is an essential testimony. Zuckerman lacks the literary skills of Nadezhda Mandelstam, but his memoirs can stand together with *Hope Against Hope* as revelations of what it meant to live and to die in the totalitarian age. Zuckerman speaks plainly, without verbal flourish or the wanton rhetoric that has disfigured some writings about the Holocaust. He sometimes gets his chronology entangled, he sometimes repeats himself and he sometimes refers to people and movements with which, despite the editor's excellent annotations, an American reader is not likely to be familiar. No matter. His memoirs hold one relentlessly. The dryness of his voice as he recalls terrible events comes to seem a sign of moral strength.

To supplement Zuckerman, I turned to Yisroel Gutman's *The Jews of Warsaw,*

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1939-1943, a first-rate historical narrative that was published by Indiana University Press a few years ago. Because Gutman was able to use both German and Polish sources, his work has a completeness that Zuckerman cannot claim. If you have strong nerves, read the two together. Even if you don't have strong nerves...

When the Polish army collapsed before the Nazi attack in 1939, the Jews of Poland found themselves in a state of disarray and fear. Whoever could, fled. But the majority of Jews, who could not flee, hoped to survive—*iberlebn* in Yiddish—the Nazi occupation in the ways that Jews had survived in previous wars, through a mixture of submission and dogged persistence, and by trying to exploit the differences among the conquerors, specifically, between the S.S., intent above all upon exterminating Jews, and the Wehrmacht, intent primarily upon military victory. This latter strategy was effective only in a few instances, since most of the time the German army knuckled under to the S.S.

JEWS FORCED FROM THEIR BUNKERS IN THE WARSAW GHETTO.

Neither the Polish Jews nor anyone else had any idea of what lay ahead. Historical precedents were of little use, and often they were completely misleading. When word began to filter through in later months about mass executions of Jews near Vilna and Chelmno, the messengers, according to Gutman, reported that "not a single person believed their stories about the outright exterminations." In any case, added some Warsaw Jews, such things simply could not happen in their city.

Though previously a well-organized community with strong secular parties, the Polish Jews were unable to develop a sustained strategy for resisting the Nazi occupation. Probably there was no strategy that could cope with terror on such an unprecedented scale. The mainstream Jewish organizations collapsed or tried to maintain themselves as a skeletal underground (which in practice often came to much the same thing). For a time the Jüdenrat, imposed by the Nazis, tried to act as a buffer, but all too soon it became primarily a vehicle for transmitting Nazi orders to the Jews. Half-starved, sometimes wholly starved, the masses of Jews were helpless.

It was the Jewish youth movements that managed best to pull themselves together. They concentrated their meager forces in underground cells in the main cities, while limiting themselves to cultural and educational activities in apartments, courtyards and the soup kitchens. Though few were able to face up to so painful a reality, the youth movements in effect acknowledged that there was little they could do for the hundreds of thousands of Jews now packed into Warsaw. They could hope only to salvage a "saving remnant" of the young.

What held these movements together was not merely, or even mainly, their Zionist and socialist convictions: it was the systematic cultivation of fraternal ties. Friendship sustained morale and enabled these young people to take extraordinary risks. During the first year or so of the occupation, the Nazis seemed relatively indifferent to what was happening within the Jewish streets, perhaps because they dismissed the possibility of Jewish resistance. At least until word came of "the Final Solution," what the Nazi occupiers cared about was to steal Jewish property, to grab Jews off the streets for forced labor and to indulge themselves in acts of random humiliation and violence against the Jews.

The Jewish youth groups set up a formal structure early in the occupation. They established committees, cells and leadership cadres. Now, from the distance of time, some of these organizational formalities may seem pathetic—and still more so their ideological discussions and debates that had lost all relevance. Mordecai Anielewicz, the future commander of the Warsaw uprising, would say that all the cultural activities—such as the more than ninety seminars in Warsaw that discussed the work of the Yiddish writer Mendele Mokher Sforim—were a waste of time. But they were not a waste of time. Anielewicz failed to understand, in his despairing impatience, that retaining some of the traditional interests was a way of preserving the humanity of the Jews. And he failed to consider the extent to which such seemingly innocuous activities, apart from their value as intellectual refreshment, could provide a basis in morale for the revolt that he was later to lead.

Similarly, Yitzhak Zuckerman, speaking in Israel after the war, would say that the Jews should have begun their revolt almost immediately after the Nazis entered Warsaw. He, too, was probably wrong—though who can be certain about such matters? In the early months of the occupation, the majority of Jews hoped to scrape through the war years; they would almost certainly have seen a call to armed revolt as a provocation. In fact, when the Jewish Fighting Organization, the unified youth structure, put up posters in early 1943 calling for armed revolt, Jews tore the posters down, and in a few instances even beat up the young people who had put them up. For the idea of armed revolt seemed not only impractical, it seemed suicidal.

Zuckerman has left a poignant description of his state of mind in the early months of the occupation, when he found himself for a brief time in the Soviet-occupied segment of Poland:

> I had a great desire for life. I loved nothing more than life. I was 24 years old, in the prime of life. But I had no illusions. I was almost sure that they [the Soviet police] would catch me one day.... Sober consideration said we could go to Siberia.... But in comparison to the information we got from Warsaw we were really living in paradise!... I could move around. In this period, anyway. Whereas Warsaw under the Nazis scared me to death.

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In order to join his comrades in Dror ("Freedom" in Hebrew), a Zionist-socialist youth movement, Zuckerman left the Soviet-occupied zone and tramped to Warsaw in early 1940. Anielewicz, a leader of Hashomer Ha'tsa'ir ("The Young Guardians" in Hebrew), another Zionist-socialist youth group but somewhat to the left of Dror, also came to Warsaw. These youth movements, together with one or two others and the youth of the Bund, the Jewish socialist party of Poland, cooperated in the limited day-to-day activities that were still possible (providing meager relief for starving friends, issuing underground papers, holding educational seminars), all with the aim, as Zuckerman puts it, of "preserving the ember."

A dark realism, not easily distinguished from a dark pessimism, came to underlie the work of Zuckerman and his friends in Nazi-occupied Warsaw. They came to realize, after a time, that "we are on a one-way road to Treblinka [the death camp near Warsaw], and there was no way back." Yet precisely this growing awareness steeled the ranks of the Jewish youth, enabling them to take the extraordinary risks that were necessary even for the modest tasks they set themselves. Sometimes even crossing a street could mean risking one's life.

Throughout the Holocaust years and into the immediate postwar period, Zuckerman held to a single idea, simple but powerful. He argued that the standard ideological divisions within the Jewish community of Poland—and there had been many of these!—should be put on hold. They had lost their relevance, though at some point they might regain it. In the face of unprecedented catastrophe, Zuckerman kept saying, it was necessary for Jews to hold, or to huddle, together, sometimes in doing what little could be done to alleviate their misery, sometimes in recognizing that their condition had become hopeless. This was not an "inspiring" idea, nor did it lend itself to exalted rhetoric. It was, at best, a last-ditch defense.

Within the politically conscious segments of the Warsaw Jewish youth, as well as among some adults, there were discussions as to whether to remain in the cities with the mass of terrorized Jews or try to join the Polish partisans in the woods. The Dror leadership, which often meant Zuckerman and his girlfriend, the indomitable Zivia Lubetkin, held to the view that they must remain in Warsaw with the other Jews, sharing their fate and perhaps being able to ease it a little. Only after the collapse of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in 1943, when the Nazis burned the Jewish quarter to the ground,

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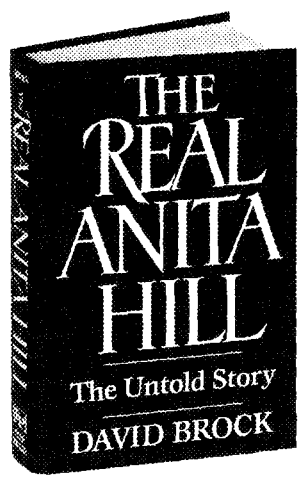

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did Zuckerman and a few friends establish contact with the partisans.

On New Year's Eve 1939 in Lwow, Dror held what Zuckerman calls "a historic conference" that consolidated relations between the Warsaw center and the isolated groups in outlying areas. This was not easy to do, since the Nazis forbade Jews to ride on trains and summarily shot any who were caught. The youth groups adopted a policy of using female comrades to serve as couriers, since some could pass for gentiles. (One of them, Lonka Kozibrodska, described by a friend as "a tall girl who didn't look at all Jewish," was especially fearless; she was finally caught by the Nazis and died of typhus in Auschwitz at the age of 26.)

The youth movements, soon a single community, coiled themselves into a tight circle. Zuckerman speaks of his friends as "Puritans" who strictly subordinated personal interests to the needs of their cause. Still, it is good to learn that the young activists paired off rapidly into couples, as if to reach out for a little pleasure before encountering death.

One of the problems for Dror, Hashomer Ha'tsa'ir and the smaller groups was the recurrent clash of opinion and feeling between them and their friends abroad, with whom, for a time, it was still possible to communicate. Zuckerman tells the story of Yosef Kaplan, a Hashomer activist, who received a solemn message from friends in Switzerland: "We are with you!" To which Kaplan, who must have been a delightful fellow, replied: "Better I should be with you!"

Kaplan's tone was jocular, but it pointed to a deeply troubled feeling among the young Warsaw activists that they had been virtually abandoned by the Yishuv, the Jewish community in Palestine. As Zuckerman, in his graver voice, puts it:

> We sent regular letters to Eretz Israel ... we sent letters complaining bitterly that they weren't writing to us.... During the *aktsia* [the round-up of more than 250,000 Warsaw Jews in the summer of 1942] we sat with Yosef Kaplan making lists of who we're going to hang in Eretz Israel ... we even talked about "gallows"; this was black humor, but it wasn't only joking: these things were very painful.

For some years now there has been a discussion among Israelis, with a self-lacerating edge, as to whether the Yishuv did all it could to help the Jews of Europe during the Holocaust. Zuckerman's comment touches upon this discussion, though probably without a full awareness of how complex were the problems facing the Yishuv during the war years and how sadly limited were its capacities to do much on behalf of the European Jews. There is now an authoritative study of the question by the Israeli scholar Dina Porat—an abridged translation called *The Blue and Yellow Star of David* was recently published by Harvard University Press—which argues that most leaders of the Yishuv, a community but not a state, were genuinely concerned about the fate of Europe's Jews, and undertook a range of projects to help and perhaps rescue them; that a lack of resources and still more, the indifference of the European states and the United States and especially the British mandatory power, crippled the efforts of the Yishuv; that the Palestinian Jews had their own severe anxieties regarding the possibility of a Nazi invasion through Syria that would destroy the future Jewish homeland. While there were numerous failures and some instances of ideological disdain for the European Jews, Porat argues, "the Yishuv in fact did more than it was ever given credit for—either then or now."

Still, between the Jews who suffered in the Holocaust and those who lived through the war in Palestine there were often acrid recriminations, perhaps best understood as a common helplessness in the most terrible moment of human history. Years later, in Israel, Zuckerman was asked by Chaim Guri, a well-known Israeli poet of the generation of the 1940s, "whether fighters from the Yishuv could have been of any help had they flown to Poland." (I take this from Porat's book.) Zuckerman replied:

> If 500 fighters had taken off, anti-aircraft fire would have brought 490 of them down on the way. And if you had been among the remaining ten, we would have had a problem hiding you—because of your native Hebrew accent, your Mediterranean eyes, the fact that you don't speak Yiddish or Polish. You could not have saved us.... Only a superpower could have saved us. A major power. But why didn't even one of you come? One!... It wouldn't have been a political or military question. It was only a question of ritual, of gesture, a sign, a hand extended, as a token of sharing our fate. Why didn't a single person come to Poland?

"Only a superpower could have saved us"—those are the decisive words. But the superpowers did not lift a finger.

A turning point in the Warsaw experience came with the establishment of a closed ghetto within the city; the Nazis did this through a series of steps that concluded in late 1940. Gutman writes that "according to German figures, 113,000 Poles and 138,000 Jews [would have to be] relocated" in order to shape the ghetto according to the Nazis' specifications. "The area of the ghetto was about 425 acres, of which 375 acres were residential space. This meant that 30 percent of the population of Warsaw was cramped into only 2.4 percent of the city." Zuckerman translates these figures into direct experience:

> The establishment of the ghetto meant a revolution in our life. Suddenly you saw poverty in a concentrated and harsh form. Every single day, the situation grew worse. Dead bodies rolled in the streets. Your senses did grow blunt in time. You got used to it, you moved a little and passed by. I was used to passing one family: two young people carrying a little girl. I recall the nobility in their stance and their silence. Every time I passed them, I would give them something. One day they disappeared and I knew they were no longer alive.

Now came the dark days. Zuckerman was arrested and sent to a labor camp. Dror had Lonka Kozibrodska nose about the camp to see if she could get some useful information. Meanwhile

> they started torturing me. Two of them stood and beat me, first on my head, with rubber clubs. When I felt blood flow, I tried to cover my head with my hands, and then they beat my hands and ears.... They went on like that, mercilessly, incessantly. At that stage, I didn't weep or whine. I took the blows in silence. And the more I got, the less pain I felt.... They wanted me to admit that [Lonka] was a Jew, but they didn't get that.... In time, I learned that if you want to endure an interrogation, choose what is important to you and don't retreat from that. I ordered myself to maintain [Lonka] was a Pole. I was wounded and very sick, but I kept my composure.

After a grueling week Zuckerman managed to get out of the labor camp, and for a while he became "the pampered child" of the Dror community. "They even gave me milk.... For the first time I had seen with my own eyes what a labor camp was. Before that, we used to distinguish between 'labor camps' and 'concentration camps,' but now I knew it was all the same."

Reports kept reaching Warsaw of mass deportations and slaughters, no longer a scattered few but hundreds, even thousands, across all of Poland. "The youth ... accepted the interpretation that this was the beginning of the end.... A total death sentence for the Jews." Zuckerman fell into "a deep depression" that "went on all day and night." About his own state of mind during his years in the underground he is entirely candid: he has no use for the rhetoric of "heroism" that would later fill orations about the Holocaust. He reveals his vulnerability and sev-

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eral times admits that he—and no doubt the others—lived in constant fear. Several times he suffered a sort of breakdown accompanied by heavy drinking. Somehow—he was obviously a man of tremendous will—he recovered himself and went back to his tasks.

The largest of all the Warsaw *aktsias*, begun on July 22, 1942, lasted until September 12, 1942. During those seven weeks more than 250,000 Jews from Warsaw were shipped, or as the Nazis put it, "relocated," to Treblinka, where most were destroyed in the gas chambers. Two days after the *aktsia* began, Adam Czerniakow, the head of the Warsaw Jüdenrat, committed suicide. He had been feared and despised by the Jews of Warsaw, but in retrospect at least, Zuckerman is remarkably tolerant, seeing Czerniakow as a weak man, utterly unqualified for the post he had been forced to assume. At first he meant to shield some Jews by arranging their submission to the Nazis, and then, as their pressures on him steadily increased, he came to serve as their adjutant in the ghetto.

Only toward open traitors—some high in the Jüdenrat, many within the Jewish police and a number who spied for the Gestapo—does Zuckerman show hatred. It's as if he felt that all the Jews had been put into a situation of complete helplessness, and that it would be pointless and inhumane to condemn those who displayed weakness. For there are situations in which the passing of moral judgment becomes itself morally irrelevant, even morally cruel—or is to be undertaken, at least, only with the greatest reluctance.

Still, it cannot be denied that in these months, while there were some incidents of individual resistance by "wildcats" who tried to escape from the streets leading to the Umschlagplatz, the square from which they would be sent to Treblinka, most of the Jews went passively to their death. This remains one of the agonizing problems of the Holocaust. It is a problem that will never be solved to anyone's complete satisfaction.

Let us note, first of all, that there *were* Jewish revolts, in and out of the concentration camps—revolts that were suppressed at a high cost in blood. But these were mostly the desperate acts of militant minorities within the Jewish ranks. By the summer of 1942, the Warsaw Jews were worn down with hunger, suffering and disease. They saw no possibility of resistance, or even survival. Perhaps there had come to many of them that numbness that follows a failed struggle to survive, a numbness by which the body signals its readiness for the end.

During the weeks of the *aktsia* the Nazi terror intensified enormously. It was reported by the Jüdenrat that 6,687 Jews were shot in the streets and houses of the ghetto between July and September 1942. The faintest sign of disobedience met with large-scale punishment, so that any Jew thinking of personal resistance had to be aware that he was endangering many other Jews. Nor was there yet an organized force capable of preparing even a token resistance. The Jews had no arms, nor any tradition of military action, with which to encounter the vastly superior forces of the German Nazis.

Gutman offers still another explanation for Jewish passivity:

> A profound faith in the Divine Will and a long-standing tradition of fatalism and submission prevented the Jews from resisting and made for a situation in which people being slaughtered by the thousands not only failed to respond but did not think to take revenge on their murderers . . .

This may explain the behavior of some Orthodox Jews, but it fails to explain the behavior of the many secular Jews who had, they often said, broken with the tradition of passivity. Perhaps that break did not cut as deeply into their consciousness as they liked to suppose; perhaps the abandoned old traditions lingered in the hearts of the Jewish socialists and Zionists.

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And also, adds Gutman, the truth "simply could not be fully apprehended. Logic, emotion and the deep-seated convictions about man's basic humanity all dictated that what was going on at Treblinka was simply not possible." Genocide is, quite literally, incredible; and for that reason, I would add, passivity before genocide was hardly a uniquely Jewish trait. How, too, explain the passivity of the Cambodians slaughtered by the Khmer Rouge? Or the thousands of Africans slaughtered by their dictators? We had better acknowledge that there are things about this terrible century that resist explanation.

In March 1942 the Jewish secular parties and youth groups held an initial meeting to discuss forming an armed resistance. In his opening report Zuckerman urged that "a joint Jewish political representation" establish contact with "the civilian and military Polish underground" and "establish a general Jewish fighting force." At this point the representative of the Bund, Maurycy Orzech, argued vehemently that not only Jews were being killed by the Nazis, but also Poles; that the Bund rejected the idea of "Jewish unity" since major class divisions remained within the Jewish community; and that the Jews should wait for the Polish proletariat to rise up and then lend support to its rebellion.

Here, for once, Zuckerman loses his temper—and why not? The Bund statement could almost have been made in 1935; it ignored the fact that what was now at stake was not politics within the Jewish community, but the very survival of the Jews as a people. Still, even in his irritation with Bundist sectarianism, Zuckerman retains an understanding of why so many adult Jewish leaders clung to their old views: it seemed the one thing they could hang on to in a moment of despair. The position of the Bund, writes Zuckerman,

> was one of the contributing factors to our mood of great depression. It was also one of our delusions. Just as we believed that when the world learned of what was going on, something would happen, so I believed that when we found a common language with the Poles, with the help of the Bund, our salvation would come. But one day we did find a common language with the Poles, and it didn't change the Jewish fate.... Of course, this is said a long time later, in hindsight. But in those days I was ready to kill my Bundist comrades for their blindness.

Overcoming its ideological rigidity, the Bund soon changed its attitude and joined in creating the Jewish Fighting Organization (ZOB, Zydowska Organizacja Bojowa, in Polish) on July 28, 1942. Marek Edelman, then a young Bundist who would leave memoirs of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising as remarkable in their way as those of Zuckerman, soon became one of the leaders among the fighters. The ZOB cadres consisted of young people, mostly in their 20s, some still younger, and a few at the advanced age of 32 or 33, treated as old-timers. There was also another, smaller Jewish fighting organization, sponsored by the Revisionists, which, after failed negotiations with the ZOB, went its own way.

The remaining Jews of Warsaw—by September 1942, somewhere between 60,000 and 70,000—mostly demoralized and burrowing for places to hide, knew little or nothing about the formation of the ZOB; but the few remaining leaders of the Jewish parties did know, and they mostly approved or acquiesced. Zuckerman records a touching incident in which Rabbi Alexander-Zysza Friedman, a figure in the religious party Agudas Israel, explained why he could not go along with the formation of a fighting force. Rabbi Friedman "was weeping as he said words of love and respect to me: My son, the Lord gives and the Lord takes." (And where was God? Edelman, in his sardonic despair, had an answer: "God was on the side of the persecutors.") Perhaps, remarks Zuckerman, since the fighters couldn't really save anyone, Rabbi Friedman's attitude should also have been the attitude of the young militants; but at that time they still clung to the hope that a few might be saved.

Operating in conspiratorial fashion, the ZOB directed its initial efforts within the ghetto itself. It set fire to the houses from which Jews had been driven so as to prevent the Nazis from seizing Jewish property. It sent a trusted comrade to execute Josef Szerynski, head of the hated Jewish police, but the bullet merely grazed his cheek. Szerynski then went into hiding—a symbolic victory for the ZOB. His successor, Yaakov Lejkin, whose record was even worse—he took open delight in beating Jews—was executed by the ZOB in October 1942.

The ZOB set up an improvised prison in the ghetto, where it held a few informers. Zuckerman remarks that the Gestapo, by now keenly interested in what was happening within the ghetto, had succeeded in infiltrating several of the Jewish institutions, so that before any act of armed resistance could be undertaken it was necessary to remove the Jewish spies and informers. The ZOB also proclaimed penalties against "economic collaborators" within the ghetto, those who had grown wealthy by exploiting Jewish labor on behalf of the Germans. These penalties were for the most part financial, to provide funds with which to buy guns. All of these actions have an unpleasant ring, of the kind one associates with "vanguard" movements, but Zuckerman pleads necessity in desperate circumstances—and who is to gainsay him?

In one of the round-ups in September 1942 the much-loved Hashomer leader Yosef Kaplan was taken by the Nazis and murdered on a street near the Umschlagplatz. When his friend Shmuel Braslaw went out to see if Kaplan might be rescued, he too was captured and immediately killed because he had a knife in his possession. A few nights later the leading group of ZOB sat together mourning the loss of their comrades, and Kaplan's girlfriend, the courier Miriam Heinsdorf, sang a song in Russian, dry-eyed, "in a trembling voice":

> The road leads far away,
> Lead me, my beloved,
> I will part from you at the door,
> Perhaps—forever.

The ZOB leadership, now including Zuckerman, Lubetkin, Anielewicz and Edelman, decided that whenever the Nazis would begin their next *aktsia*, they would rise up, ready or not. (What, after all, did "ready" mean in these circumstances?) The immediate task was to accumulate weapons, of which they had, literally, a handful. Emanuel Ringelblum, the archivist of the ghetto, would recall an incident in which two leaders of the Hashomer Ha'tsa'ir took him to a secret room to show him their arsenal—two revolvers.

One of the best Hashomer people, Aryeh Wilner—"he looked like a Polish *Sheygetz* [gentile man], spoke good, popular Polish [unlike Zuckerman, who had a Vilna accent] and sometimes wore a hat with a feather like a well-to-do farmer"—was sent to the "Aryan" side of the city to acquire arms. At first Wilner met with a frigid response from the Home Army (A.K. in Polish), which possessed a considerable store of arms but refused to give any to the ZOB because the Poles did not believe the Jews would ever put up an armed resistance. Only after January 1943, when there was sporadic armed struggle in the ghetto during another *aktsia*—an ill-coordinated struggle, with only a few ZOB units able to mobilize themselves, yet still unnerving to the Germans—did the Home Army grant a small quantity of arms to the Jewish fighters. There were sharply varying attitudes within the Home Army to the very idea of Jewish resistance, with some leaders seeing it as a Communist-inspired maneuver that might lead to a

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bloodbath of the Polish population and other leaders responding warmly to Wilner's appeals.

Until January 1943, according to Gutman, "the Home Army provided the ZOB with a total of ten revolvers, while ... an authorized representative of the Polish government [in exile reported that] in the spring of 1943 the Home Army had in its possession 25,000 rifles, 6,000 revolvers, 30,000 grenades and other types of heavier weapons." The Home Army did not try even once to commit an act of sabotage against the trains taking Jews from Warsaw to Treblinka.

After the Jewish resistance to the *aktsia* of January 1943, the ZOB heard from the Home Army that they "saluted us," and the Poles sent fifty pistols, some grenades and a few kilograms of explosives. "Since we also got the recipe for Molotov cocktails," writes Zuckerman, "we started collecting bottles.... There were also the weapons our comrades bought on the Aryan side, as well as those we bought from Jews [a few unscrupulous smugglers] in the ghetto." Once the uprising began in April, there were about 500 organized fighters in the ranks of the ZOB equipped with a motley collections of weapons, some of which, especially the revolvers, proved to be of limited or no use; but at no time were there enough weapons for all the fighters. The armed forces of the Revisionists, numbering some 250, seem to have been somewhat better equipped; they fought well during the first day of the uprising, but then, for unknown reasons, they left the ghetto, making their way through a tunnel to the other side of the city and from there to the countryside, where they were surprised by the Nazis and largely wiped out.

In March, Aryeh Wilner fell into a Gestapo trap. Since he was a central figure in negotiations with the ZOB and the two Polish forces, the Home Army and the Communist-led guerrillas, there was a great fear that he might break under torture and reveal crucial facts. He was severely tortured ("they hung him up and put white hot iron on the soles of his feet"), but he kept silent. Later, in a bold operation, he was rescued; he had to be carried, since he could not walk.

Meanwhile—we are now into early April—the ZOB had to find a replacement for Wilner. It was decided to send Zuckerman. In some of the most graphic pages of his memoirs, he tells how he slipped across to the "Aryan" side, was met by a young Jewish girl named Frania Beatus, "maybe 16 or 17 years old, blond, pretty," who "walked around in high-heeled shoes so she'd look taller and carried a woman's handbag, which she thought added maturity. So I had to smile when I saw her." (In May, Frania committed suicide upon learning the outcome of the uprising.)

Zuckerman now tramped through the streets of "Aryan" Warsaw, fearing that if he stayed during the daytime in the apartments that friends had provided, he might endanger their owners. He tried desperately to find more arms, seeking to persuade leaders of the Home Army to help the Jewish fighters, but had little success. He made contact with the Communist-led guerrilla force, from whom he got a little help. It is to Zuckerman's credit, I believe, that he does not allow later political arguments to keep him from saying that in these crucial weeks he found the underground Communists to be "fine people, aware, firm in their opinions.... They helped us with whatever little bit they could."

One evening Zuckerman was directed to the apartment of an "Armenian" woman where he would be safe. That night he woke to the sensation of a hand stroking his face. In his sleep he had been crying and shouting in Yiddish, and here was the "Armenian" woman sitting at his bedside, weeping and stroking him. "I had a vague memory of some nightmare, but I couldn't reconstruct anything.... I asked myself if the 'Armenian' woman was really Armenian, since she cried like a *Yiddishe mama.* I didn't ask because there was no need to ask."

About the uprising itself Zuckerman cannot provide a direct account, since he was stuck on the other side of Warsaw. Gutman, in his splendid book, has a classically restrained account, from which I borrow a few bits.

On April 19, 1943, as part of an *aktsia* that was to complete the Final Solution, a German military column came swaggering down the middle of Nalewki Street, a main thoroughfare in the ghetto. The Germans were singing loudly. This time, the ZOB was prepared. Chaim Frimmer, a ZOB fighter, describes their preparations:

> The windows were fortified with sandbags. People were assigned to their various positions [and]... received an order from Berl Braudo [the unit commander] to check the weapons and pass out ammunition to the men. We filled baskets with Molotov cocktails.... Mordecai Anielewicz arrived and went into Yisrael [Kanal's] room. After consultation they came out and walked through the rooms and apartments, selecting appropriate spots for positions.... "Cjank" (doses of cyanide) was passed out to certain people, especially those whose tasks required them to be mobile and heightened their chances of being caught by the Germans and tortured.

The Germans, to their surprise, were attacked by ZOB units stationed in the upper stories of adjacent buildings, from which they threw grenades. The Germans panicked, retreating in disorder and leaving casualties in the street. A short while later the Germans returned, this time hugging the sides of the buildings for safety, but in order to fire they had to expose themselves. Again, a German retreat and no Jewish casualties.

Organized military resistance by the ZOB continued for several days. General Rowecki, head of the Home Army, reported to the Polish government in London: "The resistance of groups of Jewish fighters was far beyond all expectations." And once the ZOB units showed they could hold out, even destroying a few German tanks with Molotov cocktails, an unexpected reinforcement appeared. Ordinary Jews who had been hiding in elaborate bunkers that had been put up over the last few months now joined in the fighting with the ZOB units.

Zuckerman had shrewdly predicted that if Jewish resistance proved strong, the Nazis would resort to one measure the Jews would be unable to counter: they would set the entire ghetto on fire, forcing Jews out of the bunkers and exposing them to capture and death. General Stroop, the German expert in street fighting who had been rushed to Warsaw, reported that "scores of burning Jews—whole families—jumped from windows or tried to slide down sheets that had been tied together. We took pains to ensure that those Jews ... were wiped out immediately." A few days later Stroop wrote in his report to Berlin: "Despite the terror of the raging fire, the Jews and the hooligans [Stroop's name for the ZOB] preferred to turn back into the flames rather than fall into our hands."

Organized combat could not be long sustained, since the Germans outnumbered the Jewish fighters and had far superior weapons. But sporadic resistance continued for at least a month. On April 23 Anielewicz, who would soon be killed in the fighting, sent a note to Zuckerman: "Things have surpassed our boldest dreams ... the dream of my life has come true. I've lived to see a Jewish defense in the ghetto in all its greatness and glory." Edelman, by nature disinclined to boast, would later recall the

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struggle of a ZOB unit that fought until May 3: "It is difficult to speak of victory when people are fighting for their lives and so many are lost, but one thing can be said of this battle. We did not allow the Germans to execute their plans."

Once the resistance collapsed, one group of ZOB fighters led by Wilner committed suicide rather than fall into the hands of the Nazis. Another ZOB fighter, Lolek Rotblat, shot his mother and then himself. A small number of ZOB fighters escaped through the sewers to the "Aryan" side of the city, among them Lubetkin, who reunited with Zuckerman.

The remaining chapters of Zuckerman's memoirs deal with his efforts to help place survivors of the uprising in the safe places. About eighty of the ZOB people were rescued; many of them were later killed in clashes with German forces, and many, reports Gutman, were "murdered by Polish partisans." Only about a dozen lived to see the liberation. Zuckerman and Lubetkin fought in the Polish uprising of 1944, and again survived. From a military point of view, the Warsaw Ghetto uprising was of slight significance. From what I venture to call a human point of view, its significance is beyond calculation.

One of the many distinctions of Zuckerman's memoirs is that in two or three sentences he can bring to vivid life his comrades of the Jewish underground. One needs constantly to remind oneself that these were youngsters, what we would call "kids." For me, they have become an abiding part of consciousness, these boys and girls, these young men and women. Let me put down the names of a few of them: Mordecai Anielewicz, Zivia Lubetkin, Yitzhak Zuckerman, Frumka Plotnitska, Yosef Kaplan, Tosia Altman, Marek Edelman, Lonka Kozibrodska, Kazik (Simha Rotem). There were many others.

IRVING HOWE is the author most recently of *Selected Writings, 1950-1990* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich).

The Perils of Pathography

BY ARTHUR M. SCHLESINGER JR.

Power, Privilege and The Post: The Katharine Graham Story by Carol Felsenthal

(Putnam's, 511 pp., $29.95)

Something horrid has recently befallen the craft of biography, or at least something has gone badly wrong with the practices of biographers. Natasha Spender, protesting a cheap new book about her husband, writes in the *Times Literary Supplement* that in the last decade "the assumptions held and methods employed by some biographers and endorsed by some publishers ... have changed so drastically from formerly accepted principles that a revision of the present code of practice is urgently needed." In a recent article in *The Atlantic*, Peter Davison doubles the period of decline. In the last twenty years, he writes, "the arts of biography have altered profoundly, for reasons not only social and literary but also economic, psychological and legal."

Davison explains that, as biographies become best sellers, publishers offer larger and larger advances, writers hype the product with techniques of investigative reporting and tabloid journalism and (in the United States at least) public figures are denied the protection of libel laws. Meanwhile *People* magazine and its imitators at supermarket check-out counters have enlarged the audience for voyeurism. Thus Robert Dallek, a first-class historian now at work on a biography of Lyndon Johnson, recently reported his bemusement when a high official of the Johnson administration began an interview by volunteering that LBJ had never been circumcised—a revelation of limited use for a scholar's analysis of Johnson's presidency, but rather indicative of contemporary biographical expectations.

The result is what Joyce Carol Oates has called "pathography"—biographies that revel in "dysfunction and disaster, illnesses and pratfalls, failed marriages and failed careers, alcoholism and breakdowns and outrageous conduct" and that

> so mercilessly expose their subjects, so relentlessly catalog their most private, vulnerable and least illuminating moments, as to divest them of all mystery save the crucial and unexplained: How did a distinguished body of work emerge from so undistinguished a life?

De mortuis nil nisi malum is the motto. As for the living, God help them.

Biography must indeed aim for the whole picture, warts and all. But it must deal in genuine warts; and it must not let the warts overwhelm the rest of the story. The chief constraint in depicting genuine warts is taste. Taste is modified by the passage of time. The truth does not have to come out all at once. Leonard Woolf, reproached for omitting disagreeable detail, responded, "When I wrote it was still unusual to reveal facts which might be painful to living people unless it was absolutely vital to mention them." J.R. Ackerley said of E.M. Forster:

> It would be unconscionable of me to allow my letters, which give a unique and progressive account of Morgan's deeply felt emotional affairs with people still living, and still his close and constant friends, as well as my own, to be open to public inspection while they live.

Excessive pressure for instant disclosure may lead, as it has already done in the case of James Joyce, to the defiant withholding of papers, and even their destruction, by descendants.

Time changes many things. Serious biographers today must record aspects of Carlyle, of Cather, of Forster, of Keynes that would have been unseemly if published when they were alive or shortly after their deaths. New books in England portray Daphne du Maurier as a lesbian, Philip Larkin as a racist and Lord Reith, the puritanical dictator of the BBC, as a latent homosexual. All these things appear to be true; and, now that years and people have passed on, the biographer must surely deal with them.

It is fake warts that are the real trouble. A few years ago Kenneth R. Crispell and Carlos F. Gomez claimed, in a book called *Hidden Illness in the White House*, that Franklin D. Roosevelt was secretly transported as a patient to the National Naval Medical Center at Bethesda "at least twenty-nine times from 1941 to 1945 ... under as many false names." All this, the authors suggest, was a vast conspiracy to deceive the American people. Had they bothered to check with the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (which they did not do), they would have discovered that the aliases applied to specimens from tests sent over to Bethesda for laboratory analysis, not to the president's personal appearances there. The fact is that FDR made no such secret visits.

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Nor was there concealment of his visit to Bethesda in March 1944 for a major checkup.

Nigel Hamilton, a diligent researcher who digs up much fascinating material, has wrecked the first volume of his life of John F. Kennedy by a manic obsession with his subject's parents. He calls Joseph P. Kennedy "a foul-mouthed, controlling, frightening evil-eye his children could not escape," even noting ominously that the elder Kennedy and Stalin had the same first name; he calls Rose Kennedy a selfish and distant mother, "the Ice Maiden of Abbotsford Road."

To portray the immensely lively and productive Kennedy children as victims of child abuse stretches things a little far; and so, to sustain his case, Hamilton's research perforce becomes selective. He insists that young John Kennedy confided in Inga Arvad, the Danish girl with whom he had a wartime love affair, as he confided in no one else. Yet Hamilton omits evidence from their correspondence that conflicts with his grim picture of the relations between the Kennedy parents and children: for example, Arvad writing on January 19, 1942, "It is funny how one loves a mother.... I am happy you love yours so much, and I understand why she is so fond of you."

The trouble gets really serious as the fake warts work their way into the literature and sheer repetition transforms them into facts. I would dearly love to believe that J. Edgar Hoover wore fluffy black party dresses with flounces, but the "evidence" adduced in the recent book by Anthony Summers is far from convincing; and yet Hoover the secret transvestite is already attaining the status of established truth. Similarly, "everybody knows" that the Kennedys, John or Robert or both, had affairs with Marilyn Monroe. But in fact nobody *knows*—that is to say, no evidence has yet emerged that would satisfy a critical historian. In the most recent biography of Monroe, Donald Spoto dismisses the actress's alleged connection to Robert Kennedy as "nonsense." But the absence of evidence appears to have no impact; the legend is firmly imbedded in the minds of thousands of people.

Carol Felsenthal's life of Katharine Graham is only the most recent example of contemporary pathography. Here I must disclose an interest. I met Philip and Katharine Graham for the first time in the autumn of 1945. He had just returned from the Pacific, and I from the European theater. We became immediate friends. I saw a good deal of Phil in his sadly abbreviated life, and I still see a good deal of his extraordinary wife. Felsenthal's Philip Graham bears little relationship to the brilliant, exhilarating, witty, generous-hearted man whom so many of my generation admired and adored. In *A Thousand Days*, written in 1965, two years after his death, I recalled that

> Phil Graham was a man of quite extraordinary vitality, audacity and charm, who charged everything he said and did with an electric excitement. He joined an exceptional gift for intimacy with a restless desire to provoke and challenge his intimates. He knew everybody and was intimidated by nobody. He was fascinated by power and by other men who were fascinated by power. Yet power for its own sake gave him only fleeting satisfaction. He wanted to do things. His sense of the general welfare was strong and usually sound; and he was a forceful manager of people and situations in what he conceived as the public interest.

To read the disorder and the illness of Philip Graham's self-destructive final days backward into his years of productivity and effectiveness is a failure of biographical understanding. And Felsenthal is as obsessed with anti-Semitism as Hamilton is with the elder Kennedys. She presents Philip Graham as a fervent anti-Semite, going on about "kikes" and even playing the "Horst Wessel" song to his half-Jewish wife. Philip Graham an anti-Semite? "In sixteen years of close association," Russell Wiggins, the former editor of the *Post*, testifies, "he never by any word or act revealed to me that he was anti-Semitic." I would say the same thing; and so would John Kenneth Gailbraith, and so would Philip's multitude of Jewish friends, from Felix Frankfurter, Isaiah Berlin and Joseph Rauh to Philip Elman and Marx Leva. Felsenthal even has him calling his father-in-law, Eugene Meyer, a "kike" to his face. This is one of the most improbable interviews I can imagine: Meyer was a courtly and charming gentleman, of whom Phil always spoke with respect and affection. As Wiggins writes, "They were genuinely fond of each other, and kind and thoughtful of each other." (Nor did Philip Graham ever play the "Horst Wessel" song to his wife.)

In Felsenthal's account, Katharine Graham is presented as one more case of the currently fashionable abused-child syndrome—an "ugly duckling," "overweight, pale, dowdy and thin-haired," an "unbelievable mouselike woman." She was "most bothered," Felsenthal adds in her omniscient way (she always knows exactly what her characters are thinking), "about ... her Jewishness and her plain looks." In fact, her father adored his daughter, and her mother, though an

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imperious woman inclined to sweep all before her, brought energy, excitement and ideas into the lives of her children. Felsenthal's picture of Katharine Graham bears no resemblance at all to the bright, lively, attractive, amused and amusing woman I and others have known through the years.

Felsenthal claims that Meyer "kept his distance from pleas ... to get close relatives out of Europe," lest he draw attention to his Jewishness (there she goes again). In fact, not only did Meyer drop Felix Morley, his isolationist editor, and turn the *Post* into an interventionist paper, but after the fall of France he sent a message to relatives in occupied France imploring them to take refuge in the United States. Those who came say today that they owe their lives (and their children's education) to Meyer's generosity.

Power, Privilege and The Post is a sloppy job. On page 263 Felsenthal says that the *Post* backed Nixon in 1968 and on page 271 that the *Post* remained neutral. On page 429 she quotes Murrey Marder saying that Katharine Graham "did not know that much about world affairs," and on the next page she cites Marder as saying that "tales of Kay's ignorance on foreign affairs are overdone." Her tendency is to take every side of every question. Thus, describing Katharine Graham's behavior during the strike of the *Post* pressmen in 1975: "Katharine came to be known as 'the Iron Lady' for her coolheadedness (some called it coldness). She did not back down.... She didn't flinch when strikers burned her in effigy.... Mark Meagher, however, says Kay was so scared, so hysterical, that she needed constant bucking up."

Or consider Felsenthal's treatment of the charge made by Deborah Davis in her book *Katharine the Great* that Philip Graham had sinister connections with the CIA. Felsenthal finds the idea "plausible" and Katharine Graham's dismissal of the idea "dishonest." Her conclusion is this: "Davis may not have proved that Phil had any formal tie to the CIA, but there is little doubt that he created an atmosphere that allowed his top people to feel comfortable about cooperating." Felsenthal's avowed doubts about Davis's book do not prevent her from citing it more than forty times in her endnotes. "As for the 'demonstrable errors,'" she writes, "what work of popular nonfiction is without them?" Felsenthal should know.

Power, Privilege and The Post includes some potted business history of the Grahams' newspaper, and for the rest it reads like an extended gossip column, running idly on and on, names and quotations piled on top of one another, without much logic, style or coherence. It is genuinely depressing, therefore, to read reviewers who seem to think that if something is in print, it must be so. The reviewer for *The New York Times Book Review*, for example, swallowed Felsenthal whole. "We learn that ... We learn that ... We learn that ...," he keeps writing, repeating Felsenthal's gossip as if it were all certified truth. How gullible can reviewers get? And shouldn't there be standards of historical competence for people who hand down verdicts on historical works? Reviewers should not only "learn" from the books they review; they should also bring enough knowledge to judge them responsibly.

The current fashion in biography degrades a great instrument of learning and a great art form. Perhaps it is worth recalling, now that *Unforgiven* has been anointed with an Oscar, that the most pathetic character in Clint Eastwood's movie is a biographer.

ARTHUR M. SCHLESINGER JR. is the author most recently of *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (W. W. Norton).

Poet of the Suburbs

BY JED PERL

Christen Købke by Sanford Schwartz

(Timken, 153 pp., $35)

Sanford Schwartz has published two books in the past three years, but the critical response has been so muffled that even the small circle of readers who admire his writing on art may be forgiven for sometimes wondering where he's been keeping himself. *Artists and Writers*—a collection of essays that focuses on contemporary artists such as David Salle and Anselm Kiefer, but also includes pieces on old masters and a few literary and musical topics—appeared in 1990 and contains the most heartfelt defense that we have seen of the Neo-expressionist painting that came to prominence in the preceding decade. No other writer mounts such a literate defense of the work of Salle, Kiefer, Julian Schnabel and Sigmar Polke, and this, ironically, may partly account for the relative silence that surrounds the book. Readers of *Artists and Writers* who share Schwartz's enthusiasm for the gonzo style of some of the Neoexpressionists will not necessarily care for his writing, with its hair's-breadth characterizations and elegant distinctions, while the people who are sympathetic to the writing are likely to be put off by what they perceive as Schwartz's trendy tastes. For those who had already admired the reconsiderations of early American modernism in Schwartz's first collection, *The Art Presence* (1982), his second collection could be baffling. And now Schwartz has further defied expectations by devoting a whole (albeit short) book to Christen Købke, an early nineteenth-century Danish painter whose work is not especially well known outside his homeland.

The Biedermeier atmosphere that pervades Købke's paintings is rather familiar to us. His sort of comfortably middle-class early nineteenth-century world, with its reassuring union of elegance and coziness, is much admired today. And especially some of his landscapes—with their vignettelike views of towns and suburbs, their small, neatly painted figures, their wistful early-morning or late-afternoon light—have been reproduced in surveys of nineteenth-century art. But Schwartz's book isn't the kind of fancifully literate account, with postmodernist tricks borrowed from Barthes or Foucault, that might be trusted to put Købke over as our contemporary. Schwartz is obviously intent on writing a pioneering English monograph, and the relative straightforwardness of his approach will only further confuse those who are inclined to see him as a defender of SoHo trends or, earlier, a somewhat quirky commentator on the American moderns.

Yet Schwartz on Købke has the qualities that always appeal in Schwartz's essays. This writer can describe complicated visual experiences clearly; he uses words and sentences in such a way that the language excites us and makes the author's meaning resonate. Schwartz may be into a new subject, but he's also picking up on some of his old themes. He is still fascinated by the artist who is

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something of an outsider; he still likes to guide us to idiosyncratic and untraditional kinds of beauty.

The description of Købke's paintings in the very first sentences may double, in fact, as a description of Schwartz's own method as a writer. "Like images seen through a telescope, Christen Købke's pictures have the quality of having just come into focus, as if in the next second they'll become blurry again. There is a particular glinting, lightweight clarity to this early nineteenth-century Danish painter's realism." In Købke's paintings, things come into focus, but we don't feel that the focus will hold; "the next second they'll become blurry again." The view, in other words, is crystalline but somehow fragmentary; and the inability to sustain total lucidity is a part of the artist's truth. This is, I think, somewhat like the experience of reading Schwartz's prose. He brings things into perfect focus, but he is unwilling to infer from those focused bits an overall view. This approach is not necessarily a weakness in a critic; indeed, we read on because we find something satisfying and surprising about the flashes of insight that are presented for their own sake. There is something liberating about a writer who doesn't presume to explain everything.

Købke was born into a solid family. (His father was a successful baker.) Most of his important work was done before he turned 30, and he died young, at the age of 38, in 1848. "Købke's story," Schwartz writes, "is one of youthful talent and genius—and the difficulty of going on from it." The mystery of why an artist cannot "go on" is at the heart of this book. Schwartz has never published fiction, but he brings to his elusive theme a novelist's intelligence. He is writing an English-language account based on Danish sources, and he uses the Danish setting (which he knows is unfamiliar to his American readers) to underline the suppressed drama of Købke's life. He is not afraid to make bold generalizations, of the kind for which visitors are often chided by natives: thus Danes are "attuned to the sheer momentariness of things." The bold strokes work. Schwartz carries us along on this journey into a nineteenth-century Copenhagen that is rural-feeling and at times almost toylike. He calls Købke a "Poet of the Suburbs."

We learn of other artists who lived during what has been called Denmark's Golden Age, the time of Kierkegaard and Hans Christian Andersen. Among the visual artists we encounter is Købke's teacher C. W. Eckersberg, whose ink and wash drawings of Copenhagen have some of Købke's quality and make of the city "an elegant and spooky place." Then there is the young painter Frederick Sødring, who is the subject of one of Købke's most famous and interesting pictures, an arrestingly informal portrait. Sødring—a palette in one hand, a brush in the other—leans back in his chair. The light is bright and even, illuminating his open boyish features, a plant on a table, some prints tacked casually to a door. It's a tiny painting (less than a foot and a half high) that, as Schwartz writes, "leaves us with a sense of having entered and grasped the world he lived in."

Clearly Schwartz is moved by this world of youth and hopefulness. He reproduces a number of works by other artists that record artist's gatherings of the time, and looking at these pictures he writes of how much these artists valued "their experience as students, or student life itself. There was an extreme sense of community among these young artists." The whole book is an ode to youth and promise. The early nineteenth century was the afternoon of the romantic age, and Schwartz sees Købke as a gentle romantic wanderer. "Købke's subject," he writes,

> is what he, Christen Købke, sees as he wanders. His art is one of the products of the social and personal liberties of the era after Napoleon, but it should be said that Købke wasn't in revolt from another way of being an artist. His art is an informal record of his sensations because he was an heir to the new ideas and attitudes about nature and freedom.

This is the art of someone for whom independence is a comfortable idea.

Schwartz is wonderfully convincing about these striking yet subdued paintings. I had a chance to see one of them recently, the *View of the Northern Drawbridge to the Citadel* in the National Gallery in London, which Schwartz calls "the single most glorious demonstration of Købke's individuality as a colorist and designer." The Citadel, "a fortified bastion at the edge of the city," was where Købke grew up, and it is the subject of many of his most important paintings. Købke is alert to a new kind of landscape. The buildings and the bridges that he paints are not inherently beautiful, but Købke regards each roof tile and iron railing with such cool deliberation that he turns practicality, and even banality, into poetry. The liveliness of Købke's work can sometimes be lost in reproduction, even in the subtle ones in this beautifully designed and produced book; Schwartz is very good at reminding us that "the pleasure of his work is physical and immediate." In Købke's

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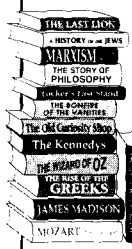

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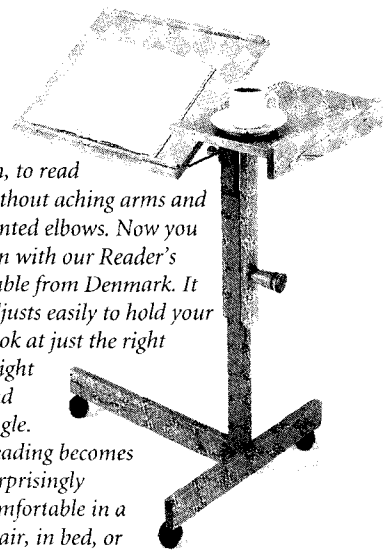

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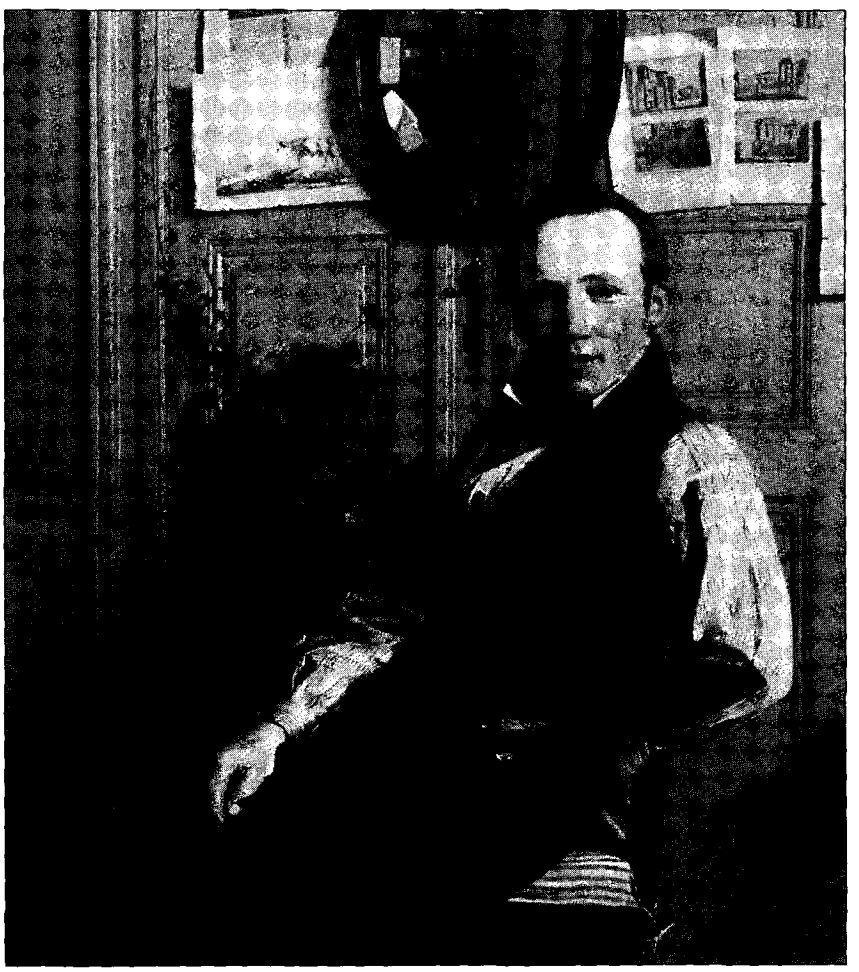
portraits, the finest of which are small and intense, "He looks at his sitters with a sympathy, a shrewdness and a lucidity that can remind us of the way his near contemporary Keats, in his letters, talks about friends and acquaintances."

But the most famous paintings are the small landscapes, in which miniature figures and bridges and buildings and trees are juxtaposed with such deliberation that the ultimate effect is a daydream about monumentality. These paintings were done around Lake Sortedam, an outskirt of Copenhagen where the family moved in 1833. They are, Schwartz writes, "about leave-taking .... Presenting odd, and quite specific, hours and times and a dimming light, the Lake Sortedam paintings are about moments of perishable beauty." There are figures on a dock, a solitary man walking at dusk, a boat moving off into the distance—and everything is clarified by the cool, clear light.

Schwartz presents all this quickly—and then the story is over. The book is like a certain kind of novella in which brief chapters are used to suggest a much larger story. The brevity is part of the message. Schwartz wants to leave the mystery around Købke; he wants us to have the sense of a life flashing past us. Between 1838 and 1840 Købke traveled in Italy; the trip marked the end of his period of greatest productivity. While Schwartz does not make any connection between Købke's encounter with the classical past and his falling off as an artist, his very silence leaves us with the sense of a psychic crisis of the kind that we encounter among the artists in the stories of Henry James. Schwartz compares Købke to a number of seminal painters—Corot, Watteau, Piero—but he also remarks that "it's hardly time to put him in a permanent niche." I rather believe that Schwartz would never want to do that. The appeal of Købke is his uniqueness, his incomparableness.



THE LANDSCAPE PAINTER, 1832

As Schwartz states right at the outset, Købke's international reputation has risen a bit in the past few years. There has been a growing art-historical interest in looking beyond what was traditionally thought of as the mainstream of nineteenth-century art, which was mostly French. Attention has gone to the Danish Golden Age, to the Nazarenes in Germany, to the Macchiaioli in Italy. Thus Schwartz's study can be seen as part of a more general effort to revise the old models of nineteenth-century art history. By now, however, what began as a new look at the nineteenth century has degenerated into the programmatic pluralism of a temple of kitsch like the Musée d'Orsay in Paris. So it's a relief to be reading a writer like Schwartz, who can praise an offbeat nineteenth-century artist without simultaneously insisting that the old art-historical pantheon be replaced by a new one. Schwartz is not a postmodernist hell-bent on overthrowing Paris. He's merely eager to find other qualities in other places, and to take each thing on its own terms.

Looking back on the writing that he's done up to now, it is possible to see Schwartz as somebody who's interested in artists who break the pattern, who go off in their own directions. His historical writings have often focused on special cases, odd cases, whether they are acknowledged masters such as Watteau and Stubbs, underknowns such as the nineteenth-century realist Thomas Anshutz and the American Precisionist George Ault or an uncategorizable post-World War II abstractionist such as the painter Myron Stout (about whom Schwartz organized a show at the Whitney Museum in 1980). When writing about more recent art, Schwartz has often prized artists who have insisted on being realists in a time of abstract art, among them Joan Brown and John Wesley, Alex Katz and David Hockney. This is not to say that he's been inhospitable to abstract art, or unable to see the flaws in some of the realists he's written about; the point is merely that he's attracted to cases that confound the mainstream view of history.

It may be exactly this viewpoint that has led Schwartz to become such a strong supporter of some Neo-expressionists. For Schwartz, the art that appeared in SoHo in the early 1980s offered an escape from modern formalism, from the view of contemporary art as an inevitable outgrowth of classic abstract art. In his best piece on the Neo-expressionists, "Polke's Dots, or, A Generation Comes into Focus" (it's in *Artists and Writers*), he writes that after looking at Salle or Schnabel or Polke, "you may see earlier artists, even Old Masters, differently." According to Schwartz, the work of the Neoexpressionists is exciting because it unravels what has heretofore appeared a coherent tradition and leaves a gallerygoer to reinvent tradition as a universe of overlapping and interpenetrating strands. After looking at these new artists, he explains, it is possible to see a lot of art in new ways:

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> You may find yourself "bringing forward" the backgrounds of paintings, and reading backgrounds and foregrounds as a sort of blinking, throbbing surface. The effect, or point, isn't only optical or formal. It's emotional, too. The marginal, "soft" stuff in a picture now becomes as interesting as the supposed center of attention.

That the focus will not hold—either in Polke or in Købke—is part of their fascination for Schwartz. Their work celebrates the evanescence of things. Schwartz believes that there is a kind of artistic knowledge that comes from accepting the fragmentary nature of experience. He has a soft spot for the artists who refuse to generalize.

I think this is an honorable position, but there are times when Schwartz's hard-won idiosyncrasy looks uncomfortably like mainstream chic. He probably rates Købke too high, an overvaluation that has something to do with the vogue for Biedermeier elegance. Although Schwartz has an interesting view of the zeitgeist, he's also at times a victim of the zeitgeist. A critic who dismisses recent Balthus with the same vehemence that he embraces recent Schnabel is a critic whose taste I am not inclined to take seriously. Schwartz sometimes has a winningly unconventional way of saying utterly conventional things. He says what everybody says about Schnabel, only he makes it sound interesting because he gets into the role of the nerd-intellectual who's obsessed by his opposite number, the jock-artist. Schwartz on Schnabel doesn't count as criticism, but I read on because Schwartz knows how to keep me engaged in what he sees and feels. While he's too conscientious a critic to ever quite allow his own taste to become the subject of his writing, what he has to say about various artists and writers suggests not an expansive picture of art but an expansive picture of—Sanford Schwartz.

The books that Schwartz has published add up to the autobiography of a contemporary aesthete. Though he is an aesthete who's not afraid to live in the present, he may nevertheless be happiest (and make us happiest) when he's off in the past. That's why Christen Købke is such a perfect subject for him. Some of the finest lines and passages in the new book are contained in an appendix called "Seeing Købke's Pictures." Here Schwartz presents a sort of travel diary of his visits to Danish museums, and it doubles as a journey into the Biedermeier universe. He describes not just what is where, but also what the museums look and feel like, their situations. In these vignette-like descriptions he touches on emotions with which everyone who loves art is familiar. He shows how our memories of works of art are mingled with our reactions to the places where we first saw them.

At the Hirschsprung Collection, he describes paintings

> hung tooth by jowl, which may be how they were once hung, but which means that, on a first view, it takes some extra time to get one's bearings. The building overall, however, as a place to show art, is extraordinary. The light and the flow of the rooms make it an ideal setting for pictures of any size.

Then there is, outside of Copenhagen, the Nivaagaard Painting Collection, which Schwartz cannot pass without mentioning how "the newer part of the museum especially, which resembles a long, low shed that has sunk gently down into the grass, presents itself with an unassumingness that, to an American museumgoer, at least, is equally disarming and appealing." And then there is the trip to Hillerød, the site of Frederiksborg Castle, subject of a number of major Købke paintings. "Especially," Schwartz writes,

> if you know Frederiksborg through Købke's images, your first view of it, as it suddenly comes into view, placid and immense—rather like a sperm whale turning up one morning in the village harbor—can be heart-stopping. The building Købke painted in the 1830s was much destroyed by fire in 1859. What we look at today is an exact reconstruction, done later in the nineteenth century. This fact doesn't get in the way of our involuntarily putting ourselves in Købke's mind, seeing the castle as he did, as we go around the place. The castle has for a long time been a national history museum—a national portrait gallery, really—so inside, beside Købke's very early portrait of Wilhelm Marstrand at an easel, one seems to encounter the entire nation.

This kind of writing on art is rare today. Maybe it is always rare. At its best, Schwartz's Købke book reminds me of other idiosyncratic works of art-historical appreciation, works such as *Les Pavillons*, Cyril Connolly's book on eighteenth-century French domestic architecture, or Mario Praz's collection of essays *On Neoclassicism*. The Købke book is something very special, and thus the muffled critical response is all the more dismaying. Have people been so starved for this kind of triumphantly personal writing about art that they no longer have a taste for it? Why has almost nobody had anything to say about this wonderfully serious and altogether entertaining book?

JED PERL is the author of *Gallery Going: Four Seasons in the Art World* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich) and is at work on *New Art City*, a study of the art scene in New York from 1950 to 1970.

Physics for Poets

They sat in the last rows of the lecture hall
cultivating a knowing remoteness
but with a secret satisfaction that the class
had been named for them. The professor
unwittingly provided them with phrases,
lines, metaphors, ideas for whole poems.
He spoke in the nasal cartoon voice
of someone who'd been breathing helium,
and his bow tie led them to suspect
his head was a balloon: they imagined it
floating up to the ceiling, where it kept on
chattering about scattering patterns
or how matter is mostly empty space . . .
how the sky should be purple and why it isn't.
They pictured a world under that purple sky
populated by red giants and white dwarves
and tiny creatures of various colors
called quarks. A world where the shortest distance
between two points was a curve, where time
slowed down and sped up, and where "wormholes"
led to alternate realities. And all of it
was made of string! They slurped up
that hypothetical vermicelli,
and, thinking of these things, their minds
achieved an asymptotic freedom.

JEFFREY HARRISON

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MIAMI DIARIST

Moodfood

THREE WEEKS AFTER *THE NEW York Times* wished it would go away, I trekked down to South Beach, Miami, which, as every consumer of style journalism now knows, is in the middle of something of a renaissance. I first visited there in 1985, when it was a truly scary, drug-dealing, run-down mess of crumbling art-deco hotels, old Jewish people and Latino gangs. It's still all those things, but now it's been given the imprimatur (and financial injection) of New York's fashion set, and so is happening: a kind of Floridian Williamsburg. Walk down Ocean Drive and you're likely to trip over several fashion shoots, the self-consciously scruffy photographers carefully picking out nooks of urban squalor to play off the cheekbones of the latest model-waifs. Coinciding with the contemporary discovery that everything cheesy from the late 1950s is actually a work of art, the shopping mall along Lincoln Road now exists in a tenuously ironized zone, its kosher delis jostling next to Ross Bleckner exhibitions and smart-drink bars, its aquarium-blue fountains spurting through quotation marks. It's hard to know how actually to engage this world, since there is no possibility of common discourse (or even language) and a disorienting confusion even about what decade you're in. The clothes are '70s, architecture '40s, murder-rate '90s and politics '80s, a culture that has its moments, but is not exactly spiritually stabilizing.

ONE SOLUTION TO THE SPIRITUAL problem (suggested and practiced by many others) is a pair of Rollerblades and a Sony Walkman, playing the kind of New Age disco the Ocean Drivers have popularized. My own recommended South Beach combo is swift consumption of a smart-drink—Memory Fuel or Fast Blast are the best, a blend of suitably scientific-sounding amino acids and vitamins—and a long aural medication of Moodswing's new album, *MoodFood*, on the Walkman. The place thus engages as it should: a sound track of style, penetrating the senses as effectively and permanently as the pages of a Condé Nast magazine. Mercifully, real life pierces through at times: a small boy walking his pet pig along the dunes, drunken frat boys mistaking the place for Fort Lauderdale, a deaf, old Jewish couple yelling at each other in a fruit store. But they emerge above the refurbished gloss, shading their eyes from the ubiquitous klieg lights. This, it seems, is the post-Reagan solution to urban collapse: get the lighting right and turn it into a backdrop for *Mirabella*.

MEANWHILE, IN EUROPE, AN ERA ended. I don't mean the dismemberment of Bosnia-Herzegovina, presided over by the ever resourceful United Nations. Andorra, the tiny principality nestled in the Pyrenees between France and Spain, entered the post-Enlightenment world. In a referendum last month, the citizens of the province that until then had been ruled by the French president and the bishop of Urgel in Spain voted for self-government. About 76 percent of the 9,123 Andorrans turned out for the election, approving a formal constitution by a resounding 74.2 percent. The new order, which came into effect at the beginning of April, mandates an assembly elected by universal suffrage and even has provisions for separation of powers. It's also likely to mean an end to the tax-free era when Andorra became a home to some 50,000 tax-sheltering foreigners. Here endeth the last place on earth where free government had avoided all the encumbrances of modernity, a blow to Burkeans everywhere. Anyone who clung—or still clings—to the possibility of government that develops organically, without revolution or reform, and that rarely intrudes into the free life of its citizens, while providing physical security and defense against its enemies, should go into mourning for a short period. When the British political philosopher Michael Oakeshott was asked to name a modern state that encapsulated the lack of a rationalized political order, coercive nanny-state and patronizing, power-hungry concerns of modern governments, he once wistfully pointed to Andorra. Happily, he's no longer alive to notice that the object of his longing is now defunct. Andorrans no doubt hope they can achieve all the benefits of parliamentary democracy without any of its rationalist follies. We'll see. They and the tax-avoiders are in for a nasty shock. Give them a decade or two and they'll probably be trying health care reform.

WHEN I WAS A GRADUATE STUDENT in political science, I lamented that no one had ever written a doctoral dissertation on the politics of boredom. For a graduate student, there are obvious obstacles to this, I understand, but there are some political issues that can only be properly understood if one grasps the interaction of their inherent tedium with the consciousness of the voting masses. Some issues—like the budget deficit—are so boring at first that they deepen in gravity and so become unboring later. Others are so interesting at first—like gays in the military—that they galvanize immediate public attention but are soon so overplayed that most people tire of them and don't particularly care which way they are eventually settled. Others—like abortion—are so permanently emotional and interesting that they never become boring and so never get resolved. And there are others again—like health care reform—that are boring in the abstract but incredibly interesting and emotive as soon as they are translated into the practical and immediate. This, as they say in statistics classes, is the outlyer, positively begging for regression analysis. If someone in graduate school could overcome the inherent tedium of the subject of tedium and find a way to predict political trends from these models, Ira Magaziner could be spared an awful amount of political grief.

IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME, but they now have software that creates anagrams. ArsMagna, a shareware program, has been providing cheap fun for hackers across the continent, including our intrepid contributor Douglas Coupland, who, in a post-literary frenzy, has been feeding the names of his friends and employers into the computer and zinging them off through his hyperactive fax machine. THE NEW REPUBLIC, it turns out, is a particularly fertile collection of vowels and consonants. Readers who thought we protested too much about the horrors of the World Trade Center bombing will be unsurprised to learn that we're an anagram for: "Hi, blew up Center." For when we're in attack mode, the following ring true: "He be new culprit," "wet bile puncher," "I pen Hebrew cult" and—an ominous description of our view of the Clinton administration—"butcher new pile." And then there's a damning indictment of our commercial viability: "weren't blue-chip." My favorites, though, are the dada ones: "pert, nubile chew" and "wee belch turnip." The least convincing: "Hi, we repent club." Not yet, anyway.

ANDREW SULLIVAN

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

Joining the Mainstream

Demography, once a topic in a few college classrooms, is now a subject of hot debate. The reason? Some demographers predict that if immigration and birth rates among minorities—especially Hispanics—continue at current rates, the U.S. will have a majority minority population and workforce in the first half of the next century. The change in demographics, they say, will harm our economy because these groups—and women, who make up a big percentage of the new workforce—are not as well prepared for the high-skills workplace of the 21st century as white males. Their achievement, especially in math and science, will be inadequate unless we find ways to improve it.

Also, there is a belief that a majority minority population will demand radical changes in our society—for example, that they will exert pressure to greatly alter our school curriculum so it reflects the views of the new majority rather than the old.

These theories have convinced many people, but they ignore some important considerations. A closer look at Hispanics, the largest and fastest growing group in this new majority, offers a different picture. The relatively poor school achievement of Hispanics is often cited as evidence that they will be unable to contribute to a skilled workforce. However, looking at overall achievement levels is misleading. Hispanics, like earlier immigrant groups, move up generationally, so new waves of immigrants mask the gains made by previous waves. Of course, there are individual youngsters who are not achieving and who should get special help. But when separated out by generation, school achievement for Hispanics is similar to that of earlier groups.

The people often lumped together as Hispanics don't consider themselves Hispanics but rather Cubans or Mexican-Americans or Puerto Ricans. They agree on some issues but differ on others.

People who talk about the majority minority population's impact also predict that it will lead to major cultural, political and educational changes. For example, they say that the various groups will join to demand a revision of the curriculum so that it no longer reflects a "Eurocentric" point of view. This depends on whether the disparate groups unite to make these demands. It also depends on whether immigrant groups continue to consider themselves as set apart from the mainstream or start seeing themselves as Americans.

A recent national survey, *Latino Voices: Mexican, Puerto Rican and Cuban Perspectives on American Politics*, by Rodolfo de la Garza, et al. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1992) offers valuable insight into the position of various Hispanic groups.

The authors found that the people often lumped together as "Hispanics" don't consider themselves Hispanics but rather Cubans or Mexican-Americans or Puerto Ricans. The groups agree on some issues—for example, a big majority strongly agrees that "There are too many immigrants." However, these groups differ widely on other issues, and "most do not recognize that they have much in common culturally." The majority feels at least as close to Anglos as they do to members of the other groups, and they "are more positively oriented toward Great Britain than Latin America."

A large majority in all three groups agrees that schools should provide bilingual education for their children, but they do not see this as a way of continuing a cultural tie to their country of origin: 70 percent or more say the purpose is to learn both languages, and less than 10 percent believe it is "to maintain Spanish language/culture." A majority in all three groups is more concerned with U.S. politics than with the politics of their country of origin. And big majorities say they feel "very strong" love for the U.S. and that they are "very proud" of this country.

The strong attachment of Hispanic groups to this country contradicts the fear, expressed by "English Only"-type groups, that Hispanics will remain an alien presence in U.S. society. The study indicates, instead, that they are moving toward the majority culture. It also suggests that they are unlikely to seek a curriculum that will isolate their children from the mainstream though, like other Americans, Hispanics will want school curricula to portray them as a group that has helped make America what it is.

There are people who maintain that Hispanics will cling to their language and culture, and we may as well prepare to meet their demands. There are others who fear this will happen and seek to pass legislation—like official language laws—to head it off. Though these groups believe they are in opposing camps, their points of view are remarkably similar. Both fail to perceive the steady pattern of integration. During every major immigration—from Ireland or Italy or the ghettos of Eastern Europe—you heard the same thing about the immigrants: "They will keep to themselves and never become real Americans." But all of these groups have become part of the majority—the majority of minorities—and made their contribution to our society. Demographers notwithstanding, there is little reason to think it will be different this time.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1993 by Albert Shanker.

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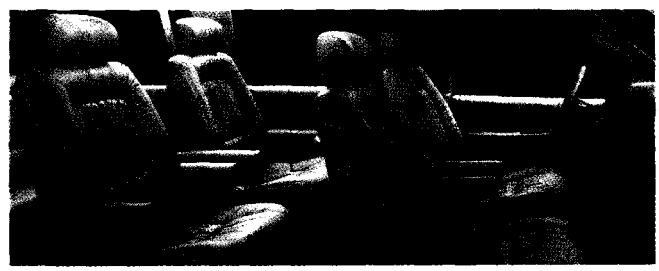

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